

BRITISH ARTISTS

GAINSBOROUGH

Edited by S. C. KAINES SMITH, M.A.

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S. C. KAINES SMITH, M.A., M.B.E.

*The volumes at present arranged comprise the following
here given in (approximately) chronological order.*

Vol.


- I. The XVI. Century Painters.
With a note on the influence of Holbein.
- II. Cornelius Johnson and Jamesone.
- III. Dobson and Walker. With
a note on the work of Van Dyck in England.
- IV. Lely and Kneller.
- V. J. Riley, Greenhill, J. M. Wright and Mary Beale.
- VI. Thornhill, Jervas, Dandridge Richardson and Hudson.
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With a note on the rise of water-colour painting.
- XIV. B. West, J. S. Copley, and G. Stuart. With a note on American painting in the XVIII. Century.
- XV. Barker of Bath and the Bath Painters.

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- XVI. Kauffman, Bartolozzi, and Zoffany. With a note on Foreign Members of the Royal Academy in 1768.
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OTHERS IN PREPARATION.



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National Gallery

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTERS

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(frontispiece)

BRITISH ARTISTS

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Thomas Gainsborough

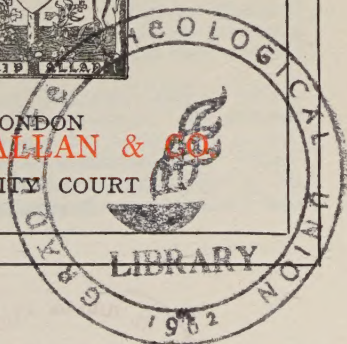
By

HUGH STOKES

(Author of *Girtin and Bonington*,
The Devonshire House Circle, *Francisco Goya*, etc.)



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EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

IN an age when painting was a business, when people came to a studio, as Gainsborough himself put it, 'for their faces,' there was not much room in the artist's life for what is nowadays called the artistic temperament. If we look at Zoffany's group of the members of the Royal Academy, we shall realise that, as a whole, it would be difficult to find a less 'temperamental' body of men.

English art in the middle of the eighteenth century had scarcely emerged from the stage of being the business of illustrating family records by counterfeit presentments of family physiognomies.

Yet Gainsborough was, if ever there was one, a temperamental painter. Poor man, he was in that respect not so much in advance of as apart from his age; he loved beauty—a very unwise predilection in a portrait-painter—and it must be confessed that if everybody whom he painted was as good looking as he made them, he lived in a better world than ours; but it was not in his portraiture, although he was accounted a good likeness-taker, that he found his fullest self-expression. That is a commonplace nowadays, but if we glance, even superficially, at the state of painting in England in his day, we shall see that to be anything but a portrait-painter was, in itself, sufficient evidence of independence of spirit—the same independence that, but for a lucky chance, would have starved poor Wilson to death.

Probably Sir Joshua Reynolds's gibe at Wilson when he spoke of Gainsborough as 'our greatest landscape-painter' cannot be justified by a comparison of the two artists in that 'genre.' Wilson was not only earlier than Gainsborough in his excursion into that hitherto almost untouched field

of English painting, but was also more truly inspired to his greatest heights by it; but there is no doubt that Gainsborough was a worthy successor to his mantle.

However, there is this to be added, that, whereas Wilson could not serve two masters, but abandoned portraits when once landscape painting had got a firm hold upon his imagination, Gainsborough, more flexible and, it may be, more delicately susceptible to the presence of beauty in whatever form it presented itself, was able to import into his portraits the flicker and change of spring sunshine, and into his landscapes the charm of an almost feminine loveliness.

His warm heart, his swift impulses, his gaiety and charm, almost as vividly expressed in his correspondence as in his painting; his love of music, and his vivid interest in everything that went on around him—all these things tend to make Gainsborough much more a mirror, turning this way and that, to reflect every aspect of the life around him, than the more solid application and more workmanlike and businesslike capacity of the great Sir Joshua, who painted pictures as pictures should be painted, according to all the laws of the schools and the accepted traditions.

Mr. Stokes's presentation of Gainsborough, his life, his work, his friends, his times, brings vividly before us this kaleidoscopic aspect of the man and of his art. His development of his scheme is orderly and logical, yet never lacking in the humanity which is essential to a proper understanding and a clear revelation of this, perhaps the most humanly engaging of all the figures of the English world of art in the eighteenth century.

S. C. KAINES SMITH.

CITY ART GALLERY,

LEEDS, 24th April, 1925.

PREFACE.

IN writing this account of Gainsborough's uneventful life, I have endeavoured, wherever possible, to quote the painter's own inimitable letters. When a man holds a running and lively pen his character cannot fail to appear in his intimate personal correspondence.

A few volumes of biography must be welcomed on the shelves of every lover of Gainsborough's art. The Fulchers were Sudbury printers, and not professional authors. But father and son collaborated in a gossiping history of their famous fellow townsman which can never be disregarded. Philip Thicknesse, with all his failings, must be held in grateful memory. His anecdotes cannot be wholly imaginative, and I do not think he was quite so black as he has been painted.

During the last few years we have received Sir Walter Armstrong's graceful criticism, and the mass of information which Mr. W. T. Whitley has collected with infinite patience and diligence. Many other sources will be found enumerated in the Bibliography, and, I trust, suitably acknowledged in the text.

H. S.

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CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERSONAL.

His Early Years, 1727-1759.

HISTORY tells us that the reign of King George the Third was a long-continued period of political distraction and social anxiety. The European world was passing through a stage of somewhat painful transition. Old precedent and modern practice were at open variance. In England the future was regarded with much foreboding, and the thoughtful minds of that generation did not hesitate to prophesy disaster.

The story of the second half of the eighteenth century is of engrossing interest to all English-speaking people. For the foundations of our commonwealth, as we know it to-day, were being laid by the men and women who congregated round the little palace at the foot of St. James's Street, or lived within the shadow of St. Paul's. Neither court nor city was large numerically,

and commerce and society seldom met on equal ground. Yet the attitudes of both classes of the community towards the problems of their time were identical. They did not fear life. They confronted the troubles of the State with a bold heart and an unceasing energy. They worked hard, and they played hard. In fact, they turned to more or less reputable account every second of fleeting time.

It is an easy task to recapitulate the famous names of that age, to conjure forth phantoms of the statesmen, warriors, authors, and wits who together built up the British system. More difficult, and more necessary, is it to appreciate the spirit of the rank and file, to learn something about the ordinary men and women. We want to meet the forgotten legislators who sat on the benches of the House of Commons and cheered the perorations of Fox and Burke ; the ladies of Mayfair who flocked to Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms, and intrigued for invitations to Devonshire House ; the readers who rushed to buy the mighty volumes of Gibbon's *Decline*, and wept over the romances Lydia Languish found so enthralling ; the

gentlemen who went to hear Wesley preach, and the other gentlemen who mixed punch at the 'Turk's Head,' or played hazard at Arthur's; the light-hearted and cosmopolitan crowd dancing in the assembly rooms at Bath or chasing each other through the dark alleys of Vauxhall; the blue and white sailors who shipped under Hood, Rodney, and Howe; the redcoats with fearsome tales of battle at Ticonderoga and Trichinopoly; the younger sons who were clearing virgin land in the American colonies; the nabobs, their pockets heavy with loot from the treasure cities of the East.

To know these people is to know England when Farmer George sat on the throne. Their names are to be found in marriage registers, in rate books, on the marble tablets which cover the walls of our churches, in the dry genealogies of the books of peerage, and the closely printed columns of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Otherwise they and their lives are forgotten. Clio has passed them by. A few—but only a few—can be rescued from the obscurity of the past, and for this favour we, and they, must thank art, and not history.

To the two great Georgian portrait-painters—Reynolds and Gainsborough—England owes an exceeding debt. Never was a small community more completely and more adequately portrayed. Van Dyck and his pupils painted the cavaliers. The Puritans avoided his brush. Lely, Riley, Kneller, and the smaller men, both English and foreign, made busy with the later Stuarts and the early Hanoverians. Richardson, Jervas, Hudson, Hayman, Hoare, and their school, did better work than we are accustomed to admit. Hogarth was a gifted portrait-painter though, like Richard Wilson, his fame is based upon other activities. But when Reynolds and Gainsborough were at the height of their powers every section of the governing classes of the time passed through their studios. Named and nameless, captains and cadets, dowagers and demireps, their features are recorded for ever on the canvases of these two artists of surpassing genius.

In an age of privilege Reynolds and Gainsborough were essentially painters of an aristocracy. Both springing from the ranks of an educated and cultured middle class

they yet do not tell us much about their own people. Reynolds frankly does not seem to have been much interested in the world outside his painting room. He was at home in the salons and libraries of his patrons. His recreation was found in the sedate company of The Club. Gainsborough, on the contrary, was never at his ease in these rarefied atmospheres. He was happier amidst men and women of lesser pretensions to birth and breeding, and he was happiest in the comradeship of musicians, of gossips, of the many irresponsible souls—both male and female—who add to the gaiety rather than to the solemnity of life.

Reynolds was a welcome member of the circle he immortalised. Gainsborough remained outside it, admittedly did not enjoy its ordered brilliance, and found his relaxation beyond its borders. The two artists were unlike in outlook and in temperament. For this reason alone, the old argument concerning their relative excellences must always lead to a fruitless conclusion. Reynolds was a cold, passionless man, almost—if we are to accept scandal—a heartless man. Gainsborough, on the contrary, was a

hot-blooded individual of acute sensibility, which he seldom attempted to restrain. His portraits are nervous and febrile in execution, and only when he was face to face with nature did he work peacefully and at rest. And because of his own failings and his abundant sympathy with the common weaknesses and sorrows of humanity he became a keenly realistic and most faithful observer of the society he painted, but to which he refused to belong.

Thomas Gainsborough was born in May 1727—the exact day is unknown—at Sudbury, in Suffolk, a town of some five or six thousand inhabitants on the banks of the River Stour. Sudbury was one of the first towns in which Edward III settled the Flemish weavers, and its hand-weaving was celebrated throughout England. To-day it is the busy centre of an agricultural countryside, with a brisker local life and movement than many larger and more pretentious towns. Sudbury boasts three great churches of much architectural beauty, and its streets are picturesque with the relics of half-timbered and Georgian houses. The birth-place of Gainsborough stands almost

unchanged in Sepulchre Street, now known as Gainsborough Street. It is a large house of early eighteenth century type, the elevation of plain red brick with prim white sash windows—dignified by a pleasing simplicity and unobtrusiveness. The family living in such a house must have occupied a position of consequence in the little town.

The history of the Suffolk Gainsboroughs has many analogies with that of the Warwickshire Shakespeares. The Gainsboroughs had been engaged in the staple trade of the locality for several generations. They had a recognised standing in the life of the township. During the reign of Charles II, the painter's grandfather had held the office of Borough Chief Constable. They were typical examples of the provincial trading classes of the nation. They were educated, but not scholars, and—despite ups and downs incidental to all families—they enjoyed comfort without amassing riches. The elder Gainsborough, like the elder Shakespeare, was a bankrupt. In neither case did the financial misfortunes of the fathers unduly affect the careers of their famous sons.

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John Gainsborough's troubles were probably the result of a philosophic broadness of mind. Philosophy, pushed to an extreme, always clashes with the more precise qualities which ensure trading success and prosperity. His business was that of a cloth and woollen merchant. In legal documents he is variously described as a milliner, a clothier, and a crape maker. He introduced into Sudbury from Coventry a profitable shroud trade, and he travelled both in England and abroad to secure his orders. He dressed well, wore a sword, and had for his chief accomplishment the very gentlemanly art of fencing. He refused to dun his creditors, and he was generous to the spinners in his employ. So his trade declined, although a family of nine children may possibly be held accountable for his lean cash-box. This 'fine old man, who wore his hair carefully parted, and was remarkable for the whiteness and regularity of his teeth,' ultimately became postmaster for Sudbury. He died in 1748.

The painter's mother was a Miss Burroughs, sister to the Rev. Humphry Burroughs, headmaster of the Sudbury Grammar School,

to which temple of learning the nephew was naturally sent. And here it may be remarked that both Reynolds and Gainsborough derived from slightly better stock than the majority of English artists of the eighteenth century. Reynolds was the son of a parson and schoolmaster; Gainsborough had an uncle of similar qualifications. Mrs. John Gainsborough was a woman of distinct refinement, who painted in water-colours. The family attended the Friars Street Independent Meeting House, a congregation which kept the name of Gainsborough on its books from 1685 to 1852. They also were in touch with the Established Church, and, although Thomas Gainsborough was baptised in the Friars Street Chapel, he undoubtedly in later life considered himself a member of the Church of England.*

Of the nine children Thomas was the youngest. John, the eldest, was known to his contemporaries as 'Scheming Jack.' He invented 'a wheel that turned in a still

* Writing to his sister in 1775, Gainsborough says, 'I told Humphry [their brother, the Independent minister] you were a rank Methodist, who says you had better be a Presbyterian, but I say Church of England.'

bucket of water,' a chronometer, a self-rocking cradle, a smoke jack, a cuckoo which sang all the year round. At his death his house in Sudbury was crowded with models. He also painted in oils, and borrowed money from his wealthier relatives. 'I could scarcely detect whether his deranged imagination or his wonderful ingenuity was most to be admired,' wrote a visitor. Humphry, the second son, became an Independent minister at Henley-on-Thames, and was also interested in mechanics. He contrived a fireproof safe, designed a universal dial, and won a premium of £50 from the Society of Arts for a model of a tide mill. He also constructed a model of a steam engine, the idea of which (according to family belief) was appropriated by James Watt. 'That engine alone' (wrote Philip Thicknesse) 'would have furnished a fortune to all the Gainsboroughs and their descendants, had not that unsuspecting, good-hearted man, let a cunning, designing artist see it, who surreptitiously carried it off in his mind's eye.'

Of the remaining brothers, Matthias died from an accident in childhood, whilst Robert eloped with a Suffolk girl to Lancashire,

and is heard of no more. The four sisters were Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Susannah. Mary and Susannah became respectively Mrs. Gibbon and Mrs. Gardiner. They both lived in Bath. Sarah married a Mr. Dupont, and became the mother of Gainsborough Dupont. Elizabeth married a Mr. Bird. Both continued to live in Sudbury.

This is a history common to a thousand provincial families, and in its routine sequence we can realise the uneventful rearing of the youngest child. He remained at the Grammar School until the age of fourteen. Legend reports him to have been a high-spirited boy who robbed orchards and played truant. No definite evidence of his vocation towards art during this period can be produced with the exception of his own remarkable reference to a picture which is now in the National Gallery. This canvas, catalogued as *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard, Suffolk* (No. 925), was offered for sale in London in 1788, and Gainsborough mentions it in a letter dated March 11th, of the same year: 'Mr. Boydell bought the large landscape you speak of for seventy-five guineas last week at Greenwood's. It is in some

respects a little in the *Schoolboy style*—but I do not reflect on this without a secret gratification ; for as an early instance how strong my inclination stood for Landskip, this picture was actually painted at Sudbury in the year 1748 ; it was begun *before I left school* ; and was the means of my Father sending me to London.’

This wood scene is sufficiently remarkable as the performance of a young artist of twenty-one, and when Gainsborough writes that it was commenced before he left school, he must have been thinking of preliminary studies, rather than of the canvas as we now see it. ‘ It may be worth remark,’ continued Gainsborough in his letter, ‘ that though there is very little idea of composition in the picture, the touch and closeness to nature in the study of the parts and *minutie* are equal to any of my latter productions. In this explanation I do not wish to seem vain or ridiculous, but do not look on the Landskip as one of my riper performances.’ The boy must have attained some confidence of hand even to have laid out so ambitious a composition. And with such evidence of his skill at twenty we can easily believe that



National Gallery

WOOD SCENE, CORNARD

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 12)

at the age of ten he was seldom seen without a pencil, and that he spent most of his holidays at work sketching among the fields and woods of Sudbury.

Immediately he left school his father sent him to London to study art in real earnest. There never was much objection to art as a career on the part of parents in the eighteenth century. The artist was a respectable craftsman who, with care and diligence, could generally reckon upon a fair livelihood—bread and cheese, with occasional cakes. That abominable phrase ‘the artistic temperament’ had not been invented, to be used as a cloak for every manner of artistic incompetence. Artists were not Bohemians but honest tradespeople, who, if they failed to obtain commissions to paint portraits, would cheerfully accept jobs to paint house-fronts and decorate carriages.

Of this period of Gainsborough’s life we know little. In a letter written by Mrs. Lane, the painter’s niece, and quoted by Mr. W. T. Whitley, we have the following story of his transference to London. ‘An intimate friend of his mother’s, being on a visit, was so struck by the merit of several

heads he had taken, that he prevailed on his father to allow him to return with him to London, promising that he should remain with him, and that he would procure him the best instruction he could obtain.' This scarcely agrees with Gainsborough's own story.

However, about the age of fourteen Gainsborough became an art student in London. Here again we become immersed in a sea of conjecture. Gainsborough is said to have boarded with a silversmith, to have started life in that craft. Mr. A. B. Chamberlain suggests that the silversmith was one of the Duponts, who worked in London during the early eighteenth century. Gainsborough's sister married a Dupont. Charles Grignion, the engraver, is an early authority for the statement. Bate, who knew Gainsborough so well in later years, says that the silversmith was a man of taste, and a good friend. Bate is also the authority for the statement that soon after his arrival in London Gainsborough made the acquaintance of Hubert Gravelot, who is said to have introduced him to the drawing school in the Academy of Arts at St. Martin's Lane. Philip Thicknesse

says that he 'attended a Drawing Academy in London.' Edward Edwardes adds that 'he was sent to London and placed under the tuition of Mr. Hayman, with whom, however, he stayed but a very short time.'

The evidence that Gainsborough worked under Hayman is slight, there is no existing record that he attended the St. Martin's Lane Academy, and his pupilage under Gravelot must have been brief. But these traditions of studentship are too strong to be disregarded, and the young Gainsborough was certainly for a while in the Frenchman's studio. Grignion in his old age told Edwardes that Gravelot was Gainsborough's first master.

Hubert François Bourguignon, who called himself Hubert Gravelot, was born in Paris in 1699, being the younger brother of Charles Bourguignon, better known as D'Anville the geographer. Gravelot, the son of a tailor, had travelled in Europe and the West Indies. He sampled life as an official in a diplomatic mission to Rome, and then as a merchant trader to San Domingo. In neither capacity did success come to him, and, at the mature age of thirty, he

commenced to work as an artist in the busy *atelier* of the prolific Jean Restout.

His graceful pencil soon captured the fancy of the public, although he was labouring in a city which could boast of the genius of such masters as Watteau, Boucher, Cochin, Eisen, and Moreau le Jeune. Keen competition was probably in some degree responsible for his removal to London about the end of 1732. In London he soon became a favourite. He was on friendly terms with Garrick, he was welcomed by the native born artists, publishers readily employed him, and he taught a number of pupils.

Gravelot returned to Paris in 1745, and died at a great age in 1793. His work was chiefly that of an illustrator, and he drew very prettily (and at times, it must be admitted, very carelessly) for the engravers. Some of the early drawings made by the youthful Gainsborough under his superintendence can still be traced. An obituary notice published on the morning of Gainsborough's funeral states that the dead master 'became the pupil of Mr. Gravelot, under whose instructions he drew most of the ornaments which decorate the illustrious

heads, so admirably engraved by Houbraken.' These heads were engraved for Buck's *Lives of Illustrious Persons in Great Britain*. A fellow-pupil with Gainsborough at this period was Charles Grignion (1716-1810), the son of a celebrated French watchmaker who lived in Covent Garden.

These influences were wholly foreign. Hayman, on the other hand, was typically English. Fulcher writes that 'whatever was questionable in Gainsborough's after conduct, must in a great measure be attributed to his early removal from home and to Hayman's influence.' Hayman was notoriously a man of convivial manners, who enjoyed a free and easy life which did not differ much from that of his contemporaries. Many years later Gainsborough warned John Henderson, the young actor, of the dangers of the town. 'London,' he wrote, 'was my first school, and deeply read in petticoats I am.' How far Hayman superintended his reading we are not told.

Hayman's artistic capacity is more to the point. He was born at Exeter in 1708, his master, Robert Brown, being a pupil of, and assistant to, Sir James Thornhill. He

helped Hogarth in the decorations of Vauxhall Gardens, and Gravelot engraved his illustrations to Shakespeare—which in itself strengthens the suggestion that Gainsborough was an assistant to Hayman and Gravelot. Sir Walter Armstrong describes Hayman as ‘at his best not greatly inferior to Hogarth. His works are often slovenly in draughtsmanship, and are always without grace, lightness, and imagination. But their execution is of the sound, fat, simple kind which was usual in English work during the first half of the eighteenth century, and formed the most desirable soil, as it were, in which to plant the flowers of Gainsborough’s fancy.’ This is a fair judgment of a portrait-painter, who, like so many of his contemporaries, has been rather unjustly disregarded by a later generation. A good example of Hayman’s talent can be seen in the London National Portrait Gallery, the subject representing Sir Robert Walpole and Francis Hayman in the artist’s studio. As the statesman died in 1745 this canvas represents Hayman, his studio, and his talent much as Gainsborough found them in the days of his pupilage. Walpole was no

pattern of morals, but he was a great patriot and a keen connoisseur, and a fellow East Anglian. Did the youthful Gainsborough ever meet him when he sat, a huge, unwieldy mass of a man, in Hayman's room? And Hayman himself was no dull clod. 'In his private character he possessed good qualities, but blended with vehement passions that rendered his society disagreeable. He was fond of athletic exercises, and once, when the great Marquis of Granby came to sit for his portrait, he and Hayman had a set-to in the true pugilistic style, before the painting was begun.' This studio must have been a place of fascinating interest to the boy from Suffolk.

Gainsborough's own work about this time is unidentified. Sir Walter Armstrong identifies two drawings, 'a respectable shopkeeper and his wife, now in the National Gallery of Ireland,' as authentic examples of Gainsborough's early London work 'quite beyond dispute.' They are signed and dated 1743-44. 'Allowing for the symptoms of inexperience, they agree precisely with other early drawings. The heads are well modelled, and the costumes drawn with

elaborate care, though as yet without facility.'

Towards the close of his first residence in London, Gainsborough occupied rooms in Hatton Garden, where he painted portraits at prices ranging from three to five guineas apiece. He also continued to paint landscapes, and modelled figures of cows, horses, and dogs, in which he reached considerable skill. Sir Henry Bate-Dudley* says that he was entirely self-supporting, and did not call upon his family for any financial aid.

Gainsborough's artistic education was neither lengthy nor deep. Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote, 'It is said of him that he was self-educated,' and in the *Fourteenth Discourse* described him as arriving 'to great fame, without the assistance of an academical education, without travelling to Italy, or any of those preparatory studies which have been so often recommended.' Thicknesse wrote in 1770, 'Nature was his

* Sir Henry Bate-Dudley (1745-1824) the 'original fighting parson' known as the Rev. Henry Bate, taking the additional surname of Dudley in 1780, and created a baronet in 1813. For some time he edited *The Morning Post*. His fine portrait, by Gainsborough, is in the National Gallery.

master, for he had no other.' Although Gainsborough's limited period of study must have been unsatisfactory to Reynolds's well-ordered mind, the President generously and truthfully sought for the foundations upon which his only real competitor and rival had raised so brilliant a fame. Reynolds told the students of the Royal Academy that Gainsborough's whole aim was to arrive at a degree of the utmost excellence in his art. To his art 'his whole mind appears to have been devoted, and to it everything was referred.' He speaks with energy of Gainsborough's 'enthusiastic ambition to excel in his art. Such a man can rise without a master.'

Gainsborough returned to Suffolk in 1745 or thereabouts. Had he remained in London he would quickly have secured a position in the then comparatively restricted world of art. Although he fully enjoyed the lighter recreations of the town, he renounced their superficial delights for the peaceful retreat of Sudbury. Thicknesse says that he was ignorant of his great talents, and describes him a few years later as of 'a modest, shy, reserved disposition, which continued with

him till his death.' This agrees with the character of Gainsborough, as we know it, from youth to age.

His reasons for settling down at Sudbury, and leaving London, were personal rather than artistic. On July 15th, 1746, he married, at Dr. Keith's chapel in Curzon Street, Mayfair, a Miss Margaret Burr; the ceremony was clandestine, taking place without licence, publication of banns, or consent of parents. Dr. Keith was a clergyman of scandalous reputation, his chapel being notorious for these irregular marriages. Gainsborough was nineteen; his wife, three years younger.*

Mrs. Gainsborough was a very beautiful girl of mysterious parentage. She is said to have had relations in Scotland and a brother in Sudbury. She evidently knew her future husband when he was working in Hatton Garden. 'My wife says I am not so good as I was then [in Hatton Garden], though I take more pains,' wrote Gainsborough in 1768 to James Unwin. Allan Cunningham

* The facts of this marriage were first published by Mr. James Greig in *The Morning Post*, October 11th, 1921.

tells the story of their meeting in mellifluous prose. 'It happened in one of Gainsborough's pictorial excursions among the woods of Suffolk that he sat down to make a sketch of some fine trees, with sheep reposing below and wood-doves roosting above, when a young woman entered unexpectedly upon the scene and was at once admitted into the landscape and the feelings of the artist. The name of this young lady was Margaret Burr; she was of Scottish extraction, and in her sixteenth year, and to the charms of good sense and good looks was added a clear annuity of two hundred pounds. These are matters which no writer of romance would overlook; and were accordingly felt by a young, an ardent, and susceptible man; nor must I omit to add that country rumour conferred other attractions—she was said to be the natural daughter of one of our exiled princes; nor was she, when a wife and mother, desirous of having this circumstance forgotten. On an occasion of household festivity, when her husband was high in fame, she vindicated some little ostentation in her dress by whispering to her niece, "I have some right to do this—for you

know, my love, I am a prince's daughter." "

The paternity of Mrs. Gainsborough has little to do with any consideration of Gainsborough's art. Thicknesse, who disliked her, said she was 'a pretty Scots girl, of low birth, who by the luck of the day had had an annuity settled upon her for life of two hundred pounds.' Thomas Green, of Ipswich, in his *Diary of a Lover of Literature*, chronicles a conversation with Mrs. Dupuis, daughter of Samuel Kilderbee, a life-long friend of the artist, in which Mrs. Gainsborough is referred to as the natural daughter of the Duke of Bedford. The correspondence between Gainsborough and his friend James Unwin, an attorney of Castle Yard, Holborn, solves the mystery, for the annuity was charged upon the estate of the Duke of Beaufort.* In 1799 Margaret Gainsborough told Joseph Farington that her mother was the natural daughter of Henry, the third Duke. Margaret Burr's marriage took place soon after the Duke's death. As the Beauforts were in direct descent from Edward III she could boast, with

* See the articles by Mr. Sydney E. Harrison in the *Connoisseur*, vol. lxii., January-April, 1922.

some truth, of being a prince's daughter.

From Sudbury the Gainsborough household moved to Ipswich. The date is uncertain. Fulcher says it was in 1745 or 1746, which is clearly an error; Mr. Whitley's research suggests 1752. A small house was hired in Lower Brook Street at a rental of six pounds a year—a mansion with a hall, two parlours, five other chambers and garrets, a kitchen and washhouse, a garden, a stable, and good cellars. Here Gainsborough lived and painted until his removal to Bath in 1759, and here were born his two daughters, Margaret and Mary. He did not work too hard. Mrs. Gainsborough's annuity kept the wolf from the door. But money was not over-abundant, for in November 1751 a loan of £400 was being raised upon the Beaufort annuity, and in 1756 Mrs. Gainsborough's life was insured to secure the loan. Her husband had many friends, and he enjoyed company. "Very lively, gay and dissipated," said Mrs. Dupuis. And John Constable, in a letter dated 1797, tells us of the musical club to which Gainsborough belonged. 'He was generally the butt of the company, and his wig was to

them a fund of amusement, as it was often snatched from his head and thrown about the room.'

This undignified anecdote does not do justice to Gainsborough's circle. Two of his friends were unlikely to so misbehave in a pot-house jest. Joshua Kirby and Philip Thicknesse were men of parts and of recognised position. They were both intimate friends of the artist, and although Thicknesse quarrelled with him in later days their friendship never wholly ceased. In the case of Kirby there was no interruption of their relationship, and he and Gainsborough sleep side by side in the little graveyard on Kew Green.

Kirby's career was typical of an artist in the earlier eighteenth century. According to a contemporary, he started life as an apprentice to a widow who carried on business in Ipswich as a house and sign writer. Hogarth is reported to have advised the young craftsman to aim at the higher levels of the fine arts, having been favourably impressed after seeing a rose Kirby had painted for a sign. This was real encouragement, for Hogarth had little love for the

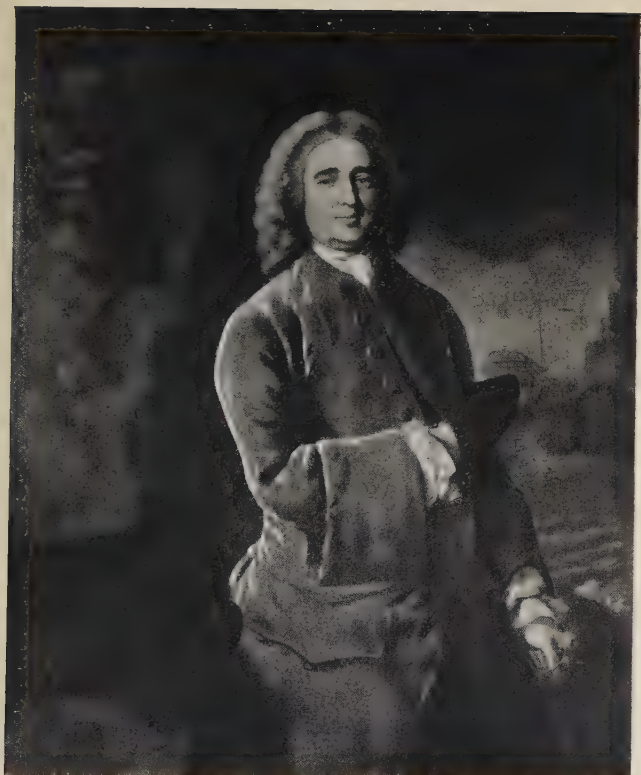
uninspired artists who graduated from coach and sign painting. Philip Thicknesse says that Gainsborough left Hatton Garden in order to join Kirby, who was 'turning his hand to every kind of painting.' Kirby carried on the house and coach painting business in Ipswich until 1759, when he moved to London, where he became prosperous, and was elected president of the Society of Artists of Great Britain.

The character of this careful artist throws some light upon the character of Gainsborough. We are told that a man can be judged by his friends. Had Gainsborough been as dissolute and capricious as William Windham describes him* he would never have retained the esteem of Kirby, who was of a serious and reserved frame of mind. 'One day' (writes Fulcher) 'as Gainsborough was sketching near Freston Tower, on the

* Windham asserts that Fonnereau of Ipswich lent Gainsborough £300, and the artist then voted against his patron's interest in a parliamentary election. 'His conscience, however, remonstrating against such conduct, he kept himself in a state of intoxication from the time he set out to vote till his return to town, that he might not relent of his ingratitude.' Windham, who was born in 1750, could not have spoken from personal knowledge.

not necessarily be untrustworthy. If Thicknesse took undue credit for the help he extended to the young artist it cannot be denied that he had a considerable influence over his friend during the first part of his career. The manner of their introduction is best related in Thicknesse's own words.

‘Soon after Mr. Gainsborough's removal to Ipswich,’ he wrote, ‘I was appointed Lieut.-Governor of Landguard Fort, not far distant, and while I was walking with the then printer and editor of the *Ipswich Journal*, in a very pretty town garden of his, I perceived a melancholy-faced countryman, with his arms locked together, leaning over the garden wall. I pointed him out to the printer, who was a very ingenious man, and he, with great gravity of face, said the man had been there all day, that he pitied him, believing he was either mad or miserable. I then stepped forward with an intention to speak to the madman, and did not perceive, till I was close up, that it was a wooden man painted upon a shaped board. Mr. Creighton (I think that was the printer's name) told me I had not been the only person this inimitable deception had imposed upon, for



National Portrait Gallery

ADMIRAL EDWARD VERNON

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 30)

that many of his acquaintance had been led even to speak to it, before they perceived it to be a piece of art ; and upon finding the artist himself lived in that town, I immediately procured his address, visited Mr. Gainsborough, and told him I came to chide him for having imposed a shadow instead of a substance upon me. Mr. Gainsborough received me in his painting room, in which stood several portraits, truly drawn, perfectly like, but stiffly painted, and worse coloured ; among them was the late Admiral Vernon's, for it was not many years after he had taken Porto Bello, with six ships only ; but when I turned my eyes to his little landscapes and drawings, I was charmed ; these were the works of fancy that gave him infinite delight.'

Fulcher, the local biographer of Gainsborough, is severe when he refers to the Lieutenant-Governor's 'parasitical patronage' of the artist. Thicknesse was determined to be remembered by posterity as the discoverer of genius. The performance is quite usual in artistic and literary circles. Many reputations have been made by judicious bear-leading. If we cannot

achieve fame by the personal possession of genius reflected glory can easily be acquired by trumpeting the merits of the unknown to an expectant and gaping crowd. Thicknesse had no doubts about Gainsborough's indebtedness to his efforts. 'I can with truth boast that I was the first man who perceived, though through clouds of bad colouring, what an accurate eye he possessed, and the truth of his drawings, and who dragged him from the obscurity of a country town, at a time that all his neighbours were as ignorant of his great talents as he was himself.

' Soon after my introduction to Mr. Gainsborough, the late king passed by the garrisons under my command ; and as I wanted a subject to employ Mr. Gainsborough's pencil in the landscape way, I desired him to come and eat a dinner with me, and to take down in his pocket-book the particulars of the Fort, the adjacent hills, and the distant view of Harwich, in order to form a landscape of the Yachts passing the garrison under the salute of the guns, of the size of a panel over my chimney piece. He accordingly came, and in a short time after brought the picture,

I was much pleased with the performance, and asking him the price, he modestly said, he hoped I would not think fifteen guineas too much. I assured him that in my opinion it would (if offered to be sold in London), produce double that sum, and accordingly paid him, thanked him, and lent him an excellent fiddle, for I found that he had as much taste for music as he had for painting, though he had then never touched a musical instrument, for at that time he seemed to envy even my poor talents as a fiddler, but before I got my fiddle home again, he had made such a proficiency in music, that I would as soon have painted against him, as to have attempted to fiddle against him. I believe, however, it was what I had said about the landscape, and Thomas Peartree's head, which first induced Mr. Gainsborough to suspect (for he only suspected it) that he had something more in him, which might be fetched out ; he found he could fetch a good tone out of my fiddle and why not out of his own palette? The following winter I went to London, and I suspected, for like Mr. Gainsborough, I only suspected, that my landscape had uncommon merit. I

therefore took it with me, and as Mr. Major, the engraver, was then just returned from Paris, and esteemed the first artist in London in his way, I shewed it to him ; he admired it so much, that I urged him for both their sakes as well as mine, to engrave a plate from it, which he seemed very willing to undertake, but doubted whether it would by its sale (as it was only a perspective view of the Fort) answer the expense ; to obviate which, I offered to take ten guineas' worth of impressions myself ; he then instantly agreed to it. The impression will show the merit of both artists ; but alas ! the picture, being left against a wall which had been made with salt water mortar, is perished and gone. That engraving made Mr. Gainsborough's name known beyond the circle of his country residence.'

Two letters written by Gainsborough about this period cast some light upon his activities and aims. On February 24th, 1757, writing to Robert Edgar, he says : ' I am favoured with your obliging letter, and shall finish your picture in two or three days at farthest, and send to Colchester according to your order, with a frame. I

thank you, Sir, for your kind intention of procuring me a few heads to paint when I come over, which I purpose doing as soon as some of those are finished which I have in hand. I should be glad if you'd place your picture as far from the light as possible ; observing to let the light fall from the left.'

In March 1758 he apologises for not making the promised visit, 'but business comes in, and being chiefly in the Face way I'm afraid to put people off when they are in the mind to sit.' He then speaks of the portrait. 'You please me much by saying that no other fault is to be found in your picture than the roughness of the surface ; for that part being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by ; in short being the touch of the pencil which is harder to preserve than smoothness, I am much better pleased that they should spy out things of that kind than to see an eye half an inch out of its place or a nose out of drawing when view'd at a proper distance. I don't think it would be more ridiculous for a person to put his nose close to the canvas and say the colours

smell offensive than to say how rough the paint lies ; for one is just as material as the other with regard to hurting the effect and drawing of a picture. For Sir Godfrey Kneller used to tell them that pictures were not made to smell of ; and what made his pictures more valuable with the connoisseurs was his pencil or touch.'

Gainsborough's life in Ipswich was happy and untroubled. In his painting room he was actively engaged ' in the Face way,' and he also found time to work upon his landscapes in the open. Constable refers to his labours *en plein air* in a letter to Smith, dated May 7th, 1797. ' There is a place up the river-side where he often sat to sketch, on account of the beauty of the landscape, its extensiveness and richness in variety, both in the fore and backgrounds. It comprehended Bramford and other distant villages on one side ; and on the other side of the river extended towards Nacton, etc. Freston alehouse must have been near, for it appears he introduced the Boot signpost in many of his best pictures.'

He had many friends. Mrs. Dupuis speaks of him as gay and dissipated. Perhaps his

easy manners shocked the dowagers—he came of a grave Nonconformist breed. But on the other hand he retained the affectionate respect of the pious Kirby, and one of his patrons was the Rev. James Hingeston, Vicar of Raydon, near Southwold. ‘I remember Gainsborough well,’ wrote Hingeston’s son. ‘He was a great favourite of my father; indeed his affable and agreeable manners endeared him to all with whom his profession brought him in contact, either at the cottage or the castle; there was that peculiar bearing which could not fail to leave a pleasing impression. Many houses in Suffolk, as well as in the neighbouring county, were always open to him, and their owners thought it an honour to entertain him. I have seen the aged features of the peasantry lit up with grateful recollection of his many acts of kindness and consideration.’

His love of music was an essential part of his life, and probably dates earlier than Thicknesse’s loan of a fiddle. Many concerts were given at Ipswich. At one of them Gainsborough met for the first time the famous violinist, Felice de Giardini. ‘As

for Giardini,' said Horace Walpole, 'I would not go across the room to hear him play to eternity.' But Giardini was a fine musician, and a good companion. 'He loved mischief better than any man alive,' wrote Miss Burney. Gainsborough was to see more of him in later life.

Ipswich boasted a musical club, and Gainsborough painted a portrait group of the members—'pretty boys they all were in their day,' said a contemporary. Fulcher's description gives some idea of those social evenings, when the Muses were worshipped with accompanying libations to Bacchus.

'Though very slight and unfinished' (writes Fulcher of the lost portrait group) 'it is exceedingly spirited, and is the more interesting as it was composed from memory. Immediately in front of the spectator are the portraits of Gainsborough himself and his friend Captain Clarke, who is leaning familiarly on the painter's shoulder. The heads of both are turned towards Wood, a dancing master, who is playing on the violin, accompanied on the violoncello by one Mills. The latter figure is merely outlined, Gainsborough declaring that he

could not recollect the expression of his "phiz."

'Gibbs, on the opposite side of the table, which is standing in the centre, is sound asleep. There is a sly piece of satire in this, he being the only musician in the party, and his sleeping would seem to indicate that the performance is not of first-rate quality. It is a candle-light scene, and by the condition of the table some degree of conviviality seems to have prevailed. Gainsborough has his glass in his hand, that of Gibbs stands before him, as also does Clarke's, and one is overturned; a couple of lights are placed on each side of a music-stand, before which are the two performers. The portrait of Gainsborough possesses much grace, and is very like that exhibited at the British Institution many years ago. He is dressed in a dark claret-coloured coat; Clarke is in uniform; Wood, in blue; and Gibbs, in sober grey.'

'When Gainsborough was leaving Ipswich, his friends paid a last visit to his studio, and expressed a wish to have some memorial of his pencil. The good-natured artist complied. One took one sketch; another, another;

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and finally, that I have been describing came into my father's hands.'

Gainsborough's sketches were not valuable in those days. "Well, this is your great Mr. Gainsborough," said a picture dealer, who had sold for the artist in his early days. "I have many and many a time had a drawing of his in my shop window before he went to Bath; ay, and he has often been glad to receive seven or eight shillings from me for what I have sold."

Constable referred to the musical club when he wrote to J. T. Smith, in 1797. 'I believe in Ipswich,' he said, 'they did not know his value until they had lost him.'

CHAPTER II.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERSONAL (*Continued*).

The Bath Period 1759-1774.

THE removal of the Gainsborough family from Ipswich to Bath was unquestionably inspired by Philip Thicknesse. Gainsborough was singularly devoid of all social ambition. His few letters, and the scraps of conversation which have come down to us, prove how whole-heartedly he was engrossed in his art. Outside his painting room he was content with the celebrity which might be afforded by a small country town, and the company which could be found round the table of an inn. Thicknesse was a man of consuming energy. It irritated him to watch such talent running to waste. Wider fields must be found for the exploitation of his friend. Owning a house at Bath, he knew that favoured city well. So the easy-going artist was spurred forward.

Rooms were to be had in The Circus at a rental of fifty pounds a year. "Fifty pounds a year, Mr. Gainsborough!" cried the economical Mrs. Gainsborough, when the project was brought to her notice. "Are you going to throw yourself into a gaol?" The Governor of Landguard Port grandly replied that if Mrs. Gainsborough would not take the rooms, a house at a hundred and fifty should be rented, and he, the Governor, would make himself responsible for the outgoings. This discussion must have taken place after a visit paid by the two men to the city. 'After Gainsborough's arrival in Bath I accompanied him in search of lodgings, where a good painting room as to light, a proper access, etc., could be had, and upon our return to my house, where his wife was impatiently awaiting the event, he told her he had seen lodgings of fifty pounds a year, in the Churchyard, which he thought might answer his purpose.' Thicknesse gained his point, and accommodation was secured.

The Gainsboroughs moved from Ipswich to Bath in October 1759. The several houses occupied by the artist during his fourteen years' residence cannot be satisfactorily

identified. A local topographer, writing in 1875, says : ' The conclusion I have arrived at is that Gainsborough first occupied rooms in the Abbey Churchyard, then a centre of attraction. Then he took a house in Ainsley's Belvedere. . . . Afterwards he moved to a detached house in Lansdowne Road, known as Lansdowne Lodge, but during the greater part of the time he was in Bath he occupied a house in The Circus, either Doctor Spender's No. 17, or one of the houses on either side.' A tablet has been placed upon No. 24. Gainsborough moved to Lansdowne Road in December 1763, where he stood at a net rental of £30 per annum, having let part of the house. ' Am I right,' he wrote to Unwin, ' to ease myself of as much painting work as the Lodgings will bring in ? ' He again removed to the aristocratic neighbourhood of The Circus about Christmas of 1766.

Bath at the beginning of the reign of George the Third was the centre of English fashionable life, occupying a position which far out-rivalled Spa or any other European watering-place, and only to be compared nowadays to such cosmopolitan ' cures ' as Vichy or Aix. The popularity of the city

amongst the wealthier classes of English society was largely due to the disturbed state of the continent. Travel across France, Germany and Italy was difficult owing to the continual military operations. And Bath was a gay city, offering all the attractions of the capital. The greatest actors and actresses appeared regularly upon its little stage ; the most celebrated musicians played in its halls ; dancing and cards were daily provided in the assembly rooms. Beau Nash and his successors ordered the manners of a pleasure-loving crowd which was indiscriminately composed of the highest as well as the lowest in the land. When the elder Pitt went to Bath in 1753 he told William Lyttelton : ‘ I have not much to say of this place, having seen little but apothecaries and doctors. I am trying the waters. . . . I have seen one ball ; Italian Princes, Pope’s nephews, hand in hand with Anglican bishops’ daughters, women of quality without number and beauties without name.’ Sir William Armstrong compiled a list of the noblemen who spent part of the year in Bladud’s city ; it includes the names of the Dukes of Beaufort, Monmouth,

Kingston, Chandos, Bedford, and Marlborough, the Earls of Sandwich and Chesterfield, Lord Clive, and many others.

Gainsborough took up his residence in Bath at the right moment. William Hoare was the only portrait-painter of any excellence as a competitor, and Hoare's work at its best is dull. Other artists working at Bath during this period were Pine, Hickey, and Beach—undistinguished and almost forgotten names. If we contrast their canvases (to be found in the National Portrait Gallery, the royal palaces, and a few country mansions) with the portraits Gainsborough had already painted—his two daughters chasing a butterfly, for example—no explanation is necessary why Gainsborough met with almost immediate success upon his arrival in Bath.

From the seclusion of Ipswich Gainsborough suddenly found himself transferred to a brilliant turmoil. He had slight inclination towards the worship of rank, but he enjoyed the conversation of his fellow-men. He was no dullard across the table. Crusty James Northcote, in one of his conversations with Hazlitt, remarked that 'Gainsborough was

a natural gentleman, and, with all his simplicity he had wit too.' At Bath Gainsborough lived in an atmosphere of wealth, leisure, and culture—and these happy conditions were immediately reflected in his art. He was peculiarly susceptible to outside influence, and this point was first made, and well made, by Sir Walter Armstrong, in his book upon *Gainsborough and his Place in English Art*. 'The consuming desire to declare himself, to exploit his own resources as it were, was deficient. All through his life, and in every branch of his activity, we find this absence of initiative. He left Ipswich in obedience to Thicknesse; he left Bath to get rid of Thicknesse: he painted like a second-rate master till he was over thirty because up till then he had only seen second-rate masters. . . . In fact, he was perhaps the most remarkable instance we can point to of a by no means rare phenomenon—of creative power of the highest kind depending on external incentives for its use.'

Within easy reach of Bath were wonderful treasure houses of art—Badminton, Corsham, Longleat, Longwood, Bowood, and Wilton.

Gainsborough became acquainted with their owners, and had access to fresh delights. At Wilton he was confronted with Van Dyck, and his introduction to the masterpieces in the Double Cube Room marked a turning point in his life. Van Dyck became his ideal and his guide. He copied his works repeatedly. Seven copies were found in his studio after his death, and there are others not accounted for. He copied Titian, Velazquez, Teniers, Rembrandt, Murillo, and Wynants. But the supremacy of Van Dyck was never disputed, and, on his death-bed, the name of the master came faintly from his feeble lips.

About a year after Gainsborough's settlement in Bath old Mrs. Delany wrote to Mrs. Dewes, dating her letter October 23rd, 1760 : ' This morning went with Lady Westmoreland to see Mr. Gainsborough's pictures (the man that painted Mr. Wise and Mr. Lucy), and they may well be called what Mr. Webb *unjustly* says of Rubens, " They are *splendid impositions*." There I saw Miss Ford's picture, a whole length with her guitar, a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold ; but I should be very sorry to have

any one I loved set forth in such a manner.' The last sentence is the amusing comment of an exceedingly sedate lady of over sixty, upon a young lady of twenty-three, who had achieved some notoriety in Bath as a musician who 'loves solitude and has unmeasurable affectations.'

The letter has another interest, for it proves that the Gainsborough and Thicknesse households were in friendly communion. Miss Anne Ford was the companion of Lady Elizabeth Thicknesse, and, when that lady died in 1762, became Philip Thicknesse's second wife.

The active Lieutenant-Governor had mapped out Gainsborough's plan of campaign to capture Bath. Thicknesse was a man of rank ; his wife was the eldest daughter of an earl. Therefore the first portrait commenced at Bath was that of Philip Thicknesse, which was intended as a 'decoy' to attract future and more lucrative sitters. Unfortunately the portrait was never completed, and became one of the bones of contention when the two friends quarrelled. Sitters were soon flocking to the studio. 'Business came in so fast,' chronicles

Thicknesse, 'that he was obliged to raise his price for a head from five to eight guineas.' Gainsborough's vogue, and his industry, can best be revealed by a bald statement of his exhibited work. In April 1761 he exhibited for the first time at the exhibition of the Society of Artists, held in London at Spring Gardens. The portrait was a full length of Mr. Nugent, afterwards Lord Clare. In 1762 he sent a portrait of Mr. Poyntz, the uncle of the child to become famous as Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. During the period 1761-68 he exhibited fifteen portraits and two landscapes at the Society of Artists, his sitters including the actors Quin and Garrick, General Honeywood, Colonel Nugent, Lady Grosvenor, the Duke of Argyll, and Captain Augustus Hervey. afterwards Earl of Bristol. His prices gradually increased. At first he charged forty guineas for a half-length, and one hundred guineas for a full-length. In 1765 he was charging sixty guineas for a half-length.

Gainsborough's life at Bath extended from October 1759 to the spring of 1774. He journeyed often to London ; the distance

was 'quickly covered. From time to time he stayed at the houses of his sitters and patrons, although he was never entirely happy in the mansions of the great. He made several riding tours in the lake district and in the south-west of England. Possibly he visited the continent. We have good grounds for believing that he went to Flanders, and there is a suggestion, without any actual evidence to support it, that he once journeyed to Paris. The Bath period must be treated in two ways ; we must give a dry chronicle of the pictures he painted, and we must then deal with those personal activities which had so marked an effect upon his art. He arrived in Bath an almost unknown provincial artist. He made his position so rapidly that when the *Bath Journal* of October 17th, 1763, issued a false report of his death he was referred to as 'Mr. Gainsborough, an eminent Painter of this City.'

The recently published Unwin correspondence reveals that the *Bath Journal* had some grounds for publishing the rumour. In July 1763 Gainsborough paid a hurried visit to London. 'I had the pleasure of

seeing your Brother for 5 minutes,' he wrote to Unwin, 'and fully intended to have spent a grave Evening with him, but such is the nature of the d—— place, or such that of this T. G. that I declare I never made a journey to London that I ever did what I intended. 'Tis a shocking place for *that*, and I wonder amongst the number of things I leave undone which should be done that I don't do many more which ought not to be done.'

This apologetic excuse for the manner in which he employed his leisure in London is amplified in a second letter dated September 15th. He has been so ill with a 'Nervous Fever' that 'for whole nights together I have thought it impossible that I could last 'til the morning.' Dr. Charlton took charge of the case, 'tho' I must not forget a prescription of my sister's (who you know is a Woman of Courage) of six glasses of good old Port which she made me swallow one evening when I should have thought two only must have knocked me off the stage.' On October 25th, only a week after the paragraph in the *Bath Chronicle*, he tells Unwin, 'I am now what they call out of Danger. . . . I have

kept my Bed 5 weeks to-morrow . . . of a most terrible fever. . . . My life was despaired of by Dr. Charlton.' Dr. Moysey had also been in consultation. 'My Dear Good Wife has sat up every night . . . and has given me all the comfort that was in her power. I shall never be a quarter good enough for her if I mend a hundred degrees.' He implored Unwin to keep his secret, and writing on December 30th of the same year admitted that his convalescence was slow. 'I have so many returns of my nervous complaint in the back part of my head, that I almost despair of getting the better of it. . . . All my hopes are built upon what the spring may do.' He hints that perhaps he has not been wise in giving so much confidence to Unwin, but 'I always think one cannot be too open to sensible people nor too reserved to fools ; nay I believe I should have blushed to have confess'd that to an Ass, which I did to you, and so much for secrets.' On March 1st, 1764, he writes, 'I'm certainly reprieved for this time, and have got a new Lease. It has been of service to me, my Friend ; I think better, and will act better for the future.' Farington's brief note

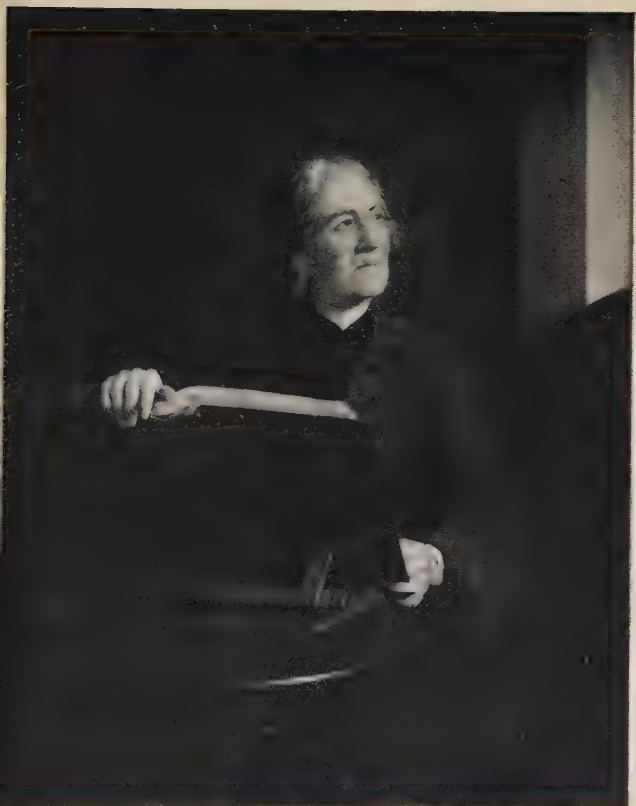
may be read in conjunction with the account of this grave illness. 'Gainsborough had not strong health, and frequently complained.'

In the letter dated from Bath, September 15th, 1763, Gainsborough said: 'The truth is, I have apply'd a little too close for these last 5 years, *that* both my Doctors and Friends really think.' His activity, both before and after his illness, was unremitting.

The Society of Artists found him a regular contributor until 1768, when he became a foundation member of the Royal Academy. In 1765, when the Society of Artists received its royal charter of incorporation, Gainsborough travelled to London to attend the general meeting, and to sign the roll. A list of the pictures he exhibited at Spring Gardens has already been given. The portrait of General Honeywood received much praise, and George the Third is said to have expressed a wish to buy it. His portrait of Garrick (which may perhaps be identified as the picture now at Stratford-on-Avon) was adversely criticised, and Gainsborough appears to have admitted his failure and set the blame upon his sitter. 'He told me,' wrote a contemporary in the *Morning*

Chronicle, 'that he never found any portrait so difficult to hit as that of the late Mr. Garrick, for when he was sketching in the eyebrows and thought he had hit upon the precise situation and then looked a second time at the model, he found the eyebrows lifted up to the middle of the forehead; and when he looked a third time they were dropped like a curtain, close over the eye. So flexible and universal was the countenance of this great player that it was as impossible to catch his likeness as it is to catch the form of a passing cloud.' Gainsborough possibly exaggerated his troubles with the mobile features of Garrick. Of this, or another portrait by him, Mrs. Garrick said that 'it was the best portrait ever painted of her Davy.'

Another portrait, exhibited in 1766, and identified by Mr. Whitley as being the portrait of Dr. Charlton, the Bath physician, excited the enthusiasm of Ozias Humphrey, no mean judge, who was then a resident of the same city. 'It was a walking figure in a familiar dress, and absolutely seemed, when first entering the room, like a living person.' In 1767 he exhibited at Spring Gardens



National Gallery, Millbank

EDWARD ORPIN
PARISH CLERK OF BRADFORD-ON-AVON
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 54)

full-lengths of Lady Grosvenor, Mr. Vernon, and the Duke of Argyll, together with a landscape of which Walpole wrote: 'The landscape is very rich, the group of figures delightfully managed, and the horses well drawn.' But being Horace Walpole's, the pen could not resist adding, 'the distant hill is one tint too dark.' After 1768 everything was sent to the Royal Academy, with the exception of a portrait and a couple of landscapes exhibited at the Free Society of Artists.

Gainsborough was one of the thirty-six original members of the Royal Academy, and, after reading the list, we must admit that he and Reynolds were the two greatest members of the foundation. The story, however, of Gainsborough's dissensions with the Academy, although they cover part of the Bath period, can better be referred to in the chapter dealing with his London life.

To the first exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1769 Gainsborough sent four canvases, portraits of Isabella, Lady Molyneux, the first Lord Rivers, a boy's head, and a large landscape. The following year he was represented by six canvases and a book of drawings; in 1771 five full-lengths and

two landscapes were sent ; in 1772 four portraits and ten landscapes were despatched from Bath, and then for five years he ceased to exhibit. Horace Walpole noted in his catalogue for 1773 that 'Gainsborough and Dance, having disagreed with Sir Joshua Reynolds, did not send any pictures to this exhibition.'

Gainsborough's life in Bath was one of continual artistic activity, and, in a city which at one time or another sheltered every person of any distinction, he made many friendships in tune with his convivial inclinations. The Royal Academy possesses twelve letters from Gainsborough to William Jackson, a musician of Exeter.* These documents must be quoted at some length, for they reveal the painter's character more clearly than any detailed analysis. Jackson was three years Gainsborough's junior, and made Gainsborough's acquaintance soon after the removal from Ipswich to Bath. He himself wrote that 'Gainsborough's character was perhaps better known to me than to any other person.' Gainsborough wrote as he

* Jackson's daughter married John Downman, A.R.A.

talked, and in reading this correspondence we obtain a vivid impression of his alert and volatile mind, the quickness of his intelligence, and some indication of his powers as a raconteur and a wit.

Sir Walter Armstrong suggests that the first letter is an answer to one of Jackson's, recommending the painter to make his landscapes follow the fashion of Elsheimer, Claude, and Gaspar Poussin.

Bath, *Aug. 23.*

MY DEAR JACKSON,

Will it—(damn this pen)—will it serve as an apology for not answering your last obliging letter to inform you that I did not receive it for near a month after it arrived shut up in a music book at Mr. Palmer's? I admire your notions of most things, and do agree with you that there might be exceeding pretty pictures painted of the kind you mention. But are you sure you don't mean instead of the Flight into Egypt, my flight out of Bath! Do you consider, my dear maggotty sir, what a deal of work history pictures require to what little dirty subjects of coal horses and jackasses, and such figures as I fill up with; no, you don't consider anything about that part of the story; you design faster than any man or any thousand men would execute. There is but one Flight I should like to paint, and that's yours out of Exeter, for while your numerous and polite acquaintances encourage you to talk so cleverly, we shall have but few productions, real and substantial productions. But

to be serious (as I know you love to be), do you really think that a regular composition in the Landskip way should ever be filled with History, or any figures but such as fill a place (I won't say stop a gap) or create a little business for the eye to be drawn from the trees in order to return to them with more glee. I did not know you admired those tragi-comic pictures, because some have thought that a regular History Picture may have too much background, and that the composition be hurt by not considering what ought to be principal. But I talk now like old square-toes. There is no rule of that kind, say you.

' But then, says I,
Damme, you lie ! '

If I had but room and time before old Palmer seals up his packet I'd trim you. I have been riding out with him this morning. I wish I had been with him in Devonshire.

Adieu,
T. G.

The second letter was an immediate reply to Jackson's answer, and is a characteristic Gainsborough monologue.

MY DEAR JACKSON,

To show you that I can be as quick as yourself, tho' I shall never be half a quarter so clever, I am answering your letter the very moment I received it from Mr. Palmer. I shall not tease you upon the subject of the *flight*, as we are now upon a *better*, and that which above all others I have long wished to touch upon; because tho' I'm a rogue in talking upon Painting and love to *seem* to take things wrong, I can be both serious and honest

upon any subjects thoroughly pleasing to me; and such will ever be those wherein your happiness and our friendship are concerned. Let me then throw aside that damned *grinning trick* of mine for a moment, and be as serious and stupid as a Horse. Mark then, that ever since I have been quite clear in your being a real genius, so long have I been of opinion that you are daily throwing away your gift upon *Gentlemen*, and only studying how you shall become the *Gentleman* too. Now, damn gentlemen, there is not such a set of enemies to a real artist in the world as they are, if not kept at a proper distance.

They think (and so may you for a while) that they reward your merit by their company and notice; but I, who blew away all the chaff, and by G——, in their eyes too if they don't stand clear, know that they have but one part worth looking at, and that is their Purse; their Hearts are seldom near enough the right place to get a sight of it. If any gentlemen come to my house my man asks them if they want me (provided they don't seem satisfied with seeing the pictures), and then he asks *what* they would please to want with me; if they say a picture, "Sir, please to walk this way, and my master will speak to you"; but if they only want to bow and compliment, "Sir, my master is walk'd out"—and so, my dear, there I nick them. Now, if a *Lady*, a handsome Lady, comes, 'tis as much as his life is worth to send her away so. But this is lo . . . [the letter is torn and missing here]. I wish you lived a little nearer so that I could see you often, or a good deal nearer if you please. I have no acquaintance now, nor will I till I can say within myself *I approve my choice*. There are but very few *clever* fellows worth hanging and that consideration makes you the more worthy.

Adieu for want of room, I'll write again very soon,

T. G.

The third letter is dated from Bath, September 14th :

MY DEAR JACKSON,

Now you seem to lay too much stress upon me, and show yourself to be a serious fellow. I question, if you could splice all my letters together, whether you would find more connection and sense in them than in many landskips joined, where half a tree was to meet half a church to make a principal object. I should not think of my pretending to reproach you who are a regular system of philosophy, a reasonable creature and a particular fellow. If I meant anything (which God knows if I did) it was this, that many a real genius is lost in the fictitious character of a gentleman ; and that, as many of those creatures are continually courting you, possibly you might forget what I, without any merit to myself remember from mere shyness, namely, that they make no part of the artist. Depend upon it, Jackson, you have more sense in your little finger than I have in my whole Body and Head ; I am the most inconsistent, changeable being, so full of fits and starts, that if you mind what I say, it will be shutting your eyes to some purpose. I am only sensible of meaning, and of having once said, that I wish you lived nearer to me ; but that this wish does not proceed from a selfishness rather than any desire of correcting any step of yours, I much doubt. I might add perhaps in my redhot way that damme Exeter is no more a place for a Jackson than Sudbury in Suffolk is for a G. ! But all the rest you know better than I can tell you, I'm certain.

I look upon this letter as one of my most agreeable performances, so don't let's have any of your airs. I could say a deal more, but what can a man say pent up in a corner thus . . .

Yours,
T. G.

In successive letters Gainsborough suggests that he and Jackson should meet in London, refers to 'a large picture of Tommy Linley* and his sister,' under date May 11th, 1768, and commissions his friend to buy a picture. 'Pray do you remember carrying me to a picture dealer's somewhere by Hanover Square, and my being struck with the leafing and touch of a little bit of tree; the whole picture was not above eight or ten inches high and about a foot long. I wish if you had time that you'd enquire what it might be purchased for, and give me one line more whilst you stay in town.'

In the sixth letter he remarks, 'One part of a picture ought to be like the first part of a tune, that you guess what follows, and that makes the second part of the tune.' The seventh letter reveals Gainsborough as an analyst and student of humanity.

Bath, *Sept. 2nd.*

MY DEAR JACKSON,

I should have wrote to you sooner, but have been strangely hurried since I left Exeter. In my way home I met with Lord Shelborne, who insisted on my making him a short visit, and I don't repent

* The Linleys were a marvellous family of musicians. Tommy Linley died in his twenty-second year. 'Had Linley lived he would have been one of the greatest ornaments of the musical world.' His sister married R. B. Sheridan. Gainsborough was intimate with the whole circle.

going (tho' I generally do, to all Lords' houses) as I met with Mr. Dunning* there. There is something, exclusive of the clear and deep understanding of that gentleman, most exceedingly pleasing to me. He seems the only man who talks as Giardini plays, if you know what I mean, he puts no more motion than what goes to the real performance, which constitutes that ease and gentility peculiar to damned clever fellows, each in their way. I observe his forehead juts out, and mine runs back a good deal more than common, which accounts for some difference betwixt our parts. . . . He is an amazing compact man in every respect, and as we get a sight of everything by comparison, only think of the difference betwixt Mr. Dunning almost motionless, with a mind brandishing like lightning from corner to corner of the earth, whilst a long cross-made fellow only flings his arms about like thrashing flails without half an idea of what he would be at—and besides this neatness in outward appearance, his store room seems cleared of all French ornaments and gingerbread work, everything is simplicity and elegance and in its proper place; no disorder or confusion in the furniture, as if he were going to remove. Sober sense and great acuteness are marked very strong in his face, but if those were all I should only admire him as a great lawyer, but there is genius (in our sense of the word). It shines in all he says. In short, Mr. Jackson, of Exeter, I begin to think there is something in the air of Devonshire that grows clever fellows. I could name four or five of you, superior to the product of any other county in England.

Pray make my compliments to one Lady, who is neat about the mouth, if you can guess, and believe me most faithfully yours

THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.

* John Dunning, Solicitor-General, 1768-70, created Baron Ashburton in 1782.

The next letter in the series is dated from Bath on June 4th :

MY DEAR JACKSON,

I am much obliged to you for your last letter, and the lessons received before. I think I now begin to see a little into the nature of modulation and the introduction of flats and sharps ; and when we meet you shall hear me play extempore. My friend Abel has been to visit me, but he made but a short stay, being obliged to go to Paris for a month or six weeks, after which he has promised to come again. There never was a poor devil so fond of harmony, with so little knowledge of it ; so that what you have done is pure charity. I dined with Mr. Duntze in expectation (and indeed full assurance) of hearing your scholar Miss Flood play a little, but was for the second time *flung*. . . . I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my viol-da-gam and walk off to some sweet village, where I can paint landskips and enjoy the fag end of life in quietness and ease. But these fine ladies and their tea drinkings, dancings, husband-huntings, &c. &c. &c., will fob me out of the last ten years, and I fear miss getting husbands too. But we can say nothing to these things, Jackson, we must jogg on and be content with the jingling of the bells, only d—— it I hate a dust, the kicking up a dust, and being confined in harness to follow the track whilst others ride in the waggon, under cover, stretching their legs in the straw at ease, and gazing at green trees and blue skies without half my taste. That's d——d hard. My comfort is I have five viols-da-gamba, three Jayes and two Barak Normans.*

Adieu, &c.,

Bath, June 4th.

THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

* Henry Jaye and Barak Norman were viol makers.

The reference to the fine ladies, their tea-drinkings, and their husband-huntings, concerns the two Miss Gainsboroughs. The elder was known in the household as 'The Captain.' She was a handsome girl with much musical talent. Mary, the younger, had artistic inclinations. Gainsborough was an indulgent father, and had views about his children. 'You have my sincerest thanks for your kind offer and intention in regard to Molly,' he wrote to James Unwin in 1764. 'But you must know I'm upon a scheme of learning them both to paint Landscape, and that somewhat above the common Fan-mount style. I think them capable of it, if taken in time, and with proper pains bestow'd. I don't mean to make them only Miss Fords* in the Art, to be partly admired and partly laugh'd at at every Tea Table ; but in case of an accident that they may do something for bread. You know it will be an Employment not so apt to lay snares in their way as Portrait or Miniature Painting, because they may be

* Miss Ford, who became the second wife of Philip Thicknesse.

retired. I think (and indeed always did myself) that I had better do this than make fine trumpery of them, and let them be led away with Vanity, and very subject to disappointments in the wild goose chase.'

The letter throws a light upon Gainsborough's family preoccupations and anxieties. The succeeding letter to Jackson begins with an apology because two letters had remained unanswered. All his letters at this period were in the same strain. He is always about to pick up his pen, but is continually 'prevented by the curs'd Face Business. If you'll believe me, my dear Friend' (he tells Unwin) 'there is not a man in the World who has less time to call his own.' With Jackson he discusses friendship:—

I have not had time since my hurry of finishing two full lengths and a landskip for the exhibition. . . . But don't be in a hurry to determine anything about me; if you are, ten to one you are wrong, those who can claim a longer acquaintance with me than Mr. Jackson knowing at this moment but very little of my real temper. I'm heartily sorry that you don't come to reside in Bath, as you expected, not because you are disappointed of the advantage of conversing with me and my books, but because I am deprived of the much greater advantages of sucking your sensible skull, and of the opportunity I might possibly have of convincing you how much I shall always esteem your various

and extensive talents, not to mention what I think still better worth mentioning, namely, your honesty and undesigning plainness and openness of soul. They say your mind is not *worldly*, no, said I, because it's *heavenly*. . . . I fear, my lad, I shall have it this exhibition, for never was such slight dabs presented to the eyes of a million. But I grow dauntless out of mere stupidity as I grow old, and I believe that any one who plods on in any one way, especially if that one way will bring him bread and cheese as well as a better, will grow the same. . . . Thanks for the indigo—a little of it goes a great way, which is lucky—Adieu, &c.

The next letter is from a painter who is beginning to enjoy the success of fame to a musician who has complained of popular neglect.

DEAR JACKSON,

I will confess to you that I think it unpardonable in me not to speak seriously upon a subject of so much consequence as that which has employed us of late; therefore you shall have my thoughts without any humming, swearing, or affectation of wit. Indeed, my affection for you would naturally have led me that way before now, but that I am soon lost if I pretend to reasoning; and you being all regularity and judgment, I own provoke me the more to break loose, as he who cannot be correct is apt to direct the eye with a little freedom of handling; but no more of it. I must own your calculations and comparison betwixt our different professions to be just, provided you remember that in mine a man may do great things and starve in a garret if he does not conquer his passions and conform to the common eye in chusing that branch

which they will encourage and pay for. Now there cannot be that difference between music and painting unless you suppose that the musician voluntarily shuns the only popular branch, and will be a chamber council when he might appear at the bar. You see, sir, I'm out of my subject already. But now in again. If music will not satisfy you without a certainty (which by the by is nonsense, begging your pardon, for there is no such thing in any profession) then I say be a painter. You have more of the painter than half those who get money by it, that I will swear, if you desire it, upon a church Bible. You want a little drawing and the use of the pencils and colours which I could put into your hand in one month, without meddling with your head; I propose to let that alone, if you'll let mine off easy. There is a branch of Painting next in profit to portrait, and quite [within] your power without any more drawing than I'll answer for your having, which is Drapery and Landskip backgrounds. Perhaps you don't know that whilst a face painter is harassed to death the drapery painter sits and earns five or six hundred a year, and laughs all the while. Your next will be to tell me what I know as well as yourself, viz., that I am an impertinent coxcomb. This I know, and will speak out if you kill me for it, you are too modest, too diffident, too sensible, and too honest ever to push in music.

Sincerely,

T. G.

Now follows one of the most delightful pieces of correspondence in any artistic biography. If Gainsborough wrote exactly as he spoke, his intimate conversation must have been fascinating. It is dated January.

25th, 1777, and addressed to Jackson at Exeter.

I suppose I never drew a portrait half so like the sitter as my silence since the receipt of your last resembles neglect and ingratitude, owing to two of the crossdest accidents that ever attended a poor fiddler. First and most unfortunately, I have been four times after Bach, and have never laid eyes on him; and secondly and most provokingly I have had a parcel made up of two drawings and a box of pencils, such as you wrote for, ever since the day after I received your favour enclosing the *Tenth*s, and directed for you to go by the Exeter coach, which has laid in my room by the neglect of two block-heads, one my nephew, who is too proud to carry a bundle under his arm, though his betters, the journeymen tailors, always carry their foul shirts so; and my d—— cowardly footman who forsooth is afraid to peep into the street for fear of being pressed for sea service, the only service God Almighty made him for, so that, my dear Jackson, if it was not for your being endowed with Job's patience I should think myself deservedly for ever shut out of your favour; but surely I shall catch Bach soon to get you an answer to your letter, and for the drawings if I don't carry them myself to the inn to-morrow—!— &c., &c. There is a letter of nonsense enclosed with the drawings to plague you once more about 6ths and 10ths which you may read as you hap to be in humour when you see the drawings. Till then I'm sure you can't bear the sight of my odious hand, so no more at present as the saying is, but yours sincerely,

T. G.

This charming letter is slightly later in date, as it was written from Pall Mall.

Bach is evidently Johann Sebastian Bach, whilst the blockhead of a nephew is Gainsborough Dupont. Another earlier letter, written from Bath in a hurry on a piece of drawing paper, proves again Gainsborough's open-hearted and generous spirit.

DEAR JACKSON,

I thought you was sick as I had not seen you for some days and last night when I went to the play in the hopes of seeing you there Mr. Palmer confirmed my fears; I fully intended putting on my thick shoes this morning, but have been hindered by some *Painter Plagues*; pray send me word whether there is any occasion for Dr. Moysey to come to you in Palmer's opinion; damn your own, for you are too much like me to know how it is with you. The Doctor shall come in a moment if there is the least occasion, and I know he will with pleasure without your hand touching your breeches pocket. I'll be with you soon to feel your pulse myself.

T. GAINSBOROUGH.

Tuesday morning.

I have spoilt a fine piece of drawing paper because I had no other at hand, and in a hurry to know how you are.

The correspondence with Garrick (of whom he painted five portraits) dates from Bath, where the two men met about 1768. Gainsborough told the actor that he had waited many years for the pleasure of the

acquaintance. Other letters written to Garrick during the Bath period reveal the modesty of Gainsborough's disposition. 'I am going to dinner,' he writes, 'and after I will try a sketch. I shall leave the price to you. I do not care whether I have a farthing, if you will but let me do it. To be sure, I should never ask more than my portrait price (which is sixty guineas), but perhaps ought to ask less, as there is no confinement of painting from life, but, I say, I leave it to you, promising to be contented *upon honour*.' In another, dated from Bath four years later, in 1772, he says: 'I ask pardon for having kept your picture so long from Mrs. Garrick. It has, indeed, been of great service in keeping me going; but my chief reason for detaining it so long was the hopes of getting one copy *like* to hang in my own parlour, not as a show picture, but for my own enjoyment, to look when I please at a great man, who has thought me worthy of some little notice. . . . That you may long continue to delight and surprise the world with your original face, whilst I hobble after with my copy, is the sincere wish of, dear sir, your most

unaccountable and obedient servant, Thomas Gainsborough.' Another letter to Garrick concludes with the words, 'God bless all your endeavours to delight the world, and may you sparkle to the last!'

John Henderson, known as 'The Bath Roscius,' who was twenty years younger than Gainsborough, received several interesting letters from the artist. Henderson was a modest man of considerable talent, and during his short day—he died in 1785—was judged second to Garrick alone. Like Jackson, the musician, he was an amateur artist, for he drew and etched with some facility. He also wrote verse. The letters to Henderson seem even more typical of Gainsborough's easy flow of conversation than those to Jackson.

Bath, 27th June, 1773.

DEAR HENDERSON,

If you had not wrote to me as you did, I should have concluded you had been laid down; pray, my boy, take care of yourself this hot weather, and don't run about London streets, fancying you are catching strokes of *nature*, at the hazard of your constitution. It was my first school, and deeply read in petticoats I am, therefore you may allow me to caution you.

Stick to Garrick as close as you can for your life; you should follow his heels like his shadow in sunshine.

FG

No one can be so near him as yourself when you please, and I'm sure when he sees it strongly as other people do, he must be fond of such an *ogre*.

You have nothing to do now but to stick to the few great ones of the earth, who seem to have offered you their assistance in bringing you to light, and to brush off all the low ones as fast as they light upon you. You see, I hazard the appearing a puppy in your eyes, by pretending to advise you, from the real regard and sincere desire I have of seeing you a great and happy man.

Garrick is the greatest creature living in every respect; he is worth studying in every action. Every view and every idea of him is worthy of being stored up for imitation, and I have ever found him a generous and sincere friend. Look upon him, Henderson, with your imitative eyes, for when he drops you'll have nothing but poor old Nature's book to look in. You'll be left to grope it out alone, scratching your pate in the dark, or by a farthing candle. Now is your time, my lively fellow. And, do ye hear, don't eat so devilishly; you'll get too fat when you rest playing, or get a sudden jogg by illness to bring you down again.

Adieu, my dear H.,

Believe me yours, &c.,

T. G.

Three weeks later Gainsborough wrote again to Henderson, and this letter must close our extracts from Gainsborough's familiar correspondence.

Bath, *July 18th, 1773.*

DEAR HENDERSON,

If one may judge by your last spirited epistle you are in good keeping, no one eats with a more

grateful countenance or swallows with more good nature than yourself.

If this does not seem sense, do but recollect how many hard-featured fellows there are in the world that frown in the midst of enjoyment, chew with unthankfulness, and seem to swallow with pain instead of pleasure; now any one who sees you eat pig and plumb sauce, immediately *feels that pleasure* which a plump morsel, smoothly gliding through a narrow glib passage into the regions of bliss and moistened with the dews of imagination, naturally creates.

Some iron-faced dogs you know seem to chew dry ingratitude and swallow discontent. Let such be kept to *under parts*, and never trusted to support a character. In all but eating stick to Garrick; in that let him stick to you, for I'll be curst if you are not his master. Never mind the fools who talk of imitation and copying. All is imitation, and if you quit that natural likeness to Garrick which your mother bestowed on you, you'll be flung. Ask Garrick else.

Why, sir, what makes the difference between man and man is real performance and not genius or conception. There are a thousand Garricks, a thousand Giardinis, and Fischers, and Abels. Why only one Garrick, with Garrick's eyes, voice, &c., &c., &c.? One Giardini with Giardini's fingers, &c., &c.? But one Fischer with Fischer's dexterity, quickness, &c.? Or more than one Abel with Abel's feeling upon that instrument? All the rest of the world are mere *heavers* and *see'rs*.

Now, as I said in my last, as Nature seems to have intended the same thing in you as in Garrick, no matter how short or how long, her kind intention must not be crossed. If it is, she will tip the wink to Madame Fortune and you'll be kicked downstairs.

Think on that, Master Ford.

God bless you.

T. G.

When this letter was written Gainsborough must already have been considering the possibility of his removal from Bath. The traditional reason usually given is the story of his quarrel with Philip Thicknesse. 'He certainly had never gone from Bath to London had not this untoward circumstance arisen between us ; and it is no less singular that I, who had taken so much pains to remove him to Bath, should be the cause of driving him from thence.' Thus wrote Thicknesse in his *Memoirs*, and Fulcher accepts the Governor's story.

'I cannot help relating a very singular and extraordinary circumstance' (wrote Thicknesse), 'which arose between him, Mrs. Thicknesse, and myself ; for though it is very painful for me to reflect on, and much more so to relate, it turned out fortunately for him, and thereby lessened my concern, as he certainly had never gone from Bath to London, had not this untoward circumstance arisen between us. . . . He had asked me, when he first went to Bath, to give him the portrait of a little Spanish girl painted upon copper, with a guitar in her hand, and a feather in her hair, a picture

now at his house in Pall Mall, the study of which he has often told me, made him a portrait-painter ; and as he afterwards painted Mrs. Thicknesse's full-length, before she was my wife, he rolled it up in a landscape of the same size, and of his own pencil, and sent it to me to London by the waggon. I was much surprised at the first opening of it, to see the head of a large oak tree, instead of Mrs. Thicknesse's head, but I soon found between the two pictures a note as follows : " Lest Mrs. Thicknesse's picture should have been damaged in the carriage to town, this landscape is put as a case to protect it, and I now return you many thanks for having procured me the favour of her sitting to me, it has done me service, and I know it will give you pleasure."

' During our residence in Bath, he had often desired me to sit to him for a companion to it, which I as often declined ; not because I should not have felt myself and my person too, highly flattered, but because I owed Mr. Gainsborough so much regard, esteem, and friendship, that I could not bear he should toil for nothing, knowing how hard he worked for profit. However, during the

last year of his residence at Bath, he fell in love with Mrs. Thicknesse's viol-di-gamba, and often, when he dropped into my house and took it up, offered me a hundred guineas for it ; at that time I had reason to believe I might not find it inconvenient ever to remove from my own house in the Crescent, and observing to Mrs. Thicknesse how much he admired her viol, that he had some very good ones of his own, and that she might at any time have the use of either, she consented to give him an instrument made in the year 1612, of exquisite workmanship, and mellifluous tone, and which was certainly worth a hundred guineas. We then asked him and his family to supper with us, after which Mrs. Thicknesse, putting the instrument before him, desired he would play one of his best lessons upon it ; this I say was after supper, for till poor Gainsborough had got a little borrowed courage (such was his natural modesty) he could neither play nor sing ! He then played, and charmingly too, one of his dear friend Abel's lessons, and Mrs. Thicknesse told him he deserved the instrument for his reward, and desired his acceptance of it, but said, " At your leisure,

give me my husband's picture to hang by the side of my own." A hundred full-length pictures bespoken, could not have given my grateful and generous friend half the pleasure, a pleasure in which I participated highly, because I knew with what delight he would fag through the day's work to rest his cunning fingers at night over Abel's compositions, and an instrument he so highly valued. Gainsborough was so transported with this present that he said, "keep me hungry! keep me hungry! and do not send the instrument till I have finished the picture." The viol-di-gamba, however, was sent the next morning, and the same day he stretched a canvas, called upon me to attend, and he soon finished the head, rubbed in the dead colouring of the full-length, painted my Newfoundland dog at my feet; and then it was put by, and no more said of it, or done to it. After some considerable time had passed, Mrs. Thicknesse and I called one morning at his house; Mr. Gainsborough invited her up into his picture room, saying, "Madam, I have something above to show you." Now the reader will naturally conclude, as she did,

that it was some further progress upon my picture, which, as it was last left, had something of the appearance (for want of light and shade in the drapery) of a drowned man ready to burst, or rather of a ragged body which had been blown about upon a gibbet on Hounslow Heath, for the dog's head, and his master's, were the only parts that betrayed the pencil of so great a master. But upon Mrs. Thicknesse's entering the room, she found it was to show her Mr. Fischer's portrait, painted at full length, completely finished, in scarlet and gold, like a Colonel of the foot guards, and mine standing in its tatter-a-rag condition by the side of it ! Mrs. Thicknesse knew this was a picture not to be paid for, and that it was begun and completed after mine. She would have rejoiced to have seen a hundred pictures finished before mine, that were to be paid for ; but she instantly burst into tears, retired, and wrote Mr. Gainsborough a note, desiring him to put my picture up in his garret, and not let it stand to be a foil to Mr. Fischer's ; he did so, and as instantly sent home the viol-di-gamba ! Upon my meeting Mr. Gainsborough, I believe the

next day, I asked him how he could have acted so imprudently? and observed to him that it was not consistent with his usual delicacy, nor good sense, that even if he had made a foolish bargain with her, yet it was a bargain, and ought to be fulfilled, for I must own, that had he been a man I loved less, I too should have been a little offended. Now, reason and good sense had returned to my friend. "I own," said he, "I was very wrong, not only in doing as I did, but I have been guilty also of a shameful indelicacy in accepting the instrument which Mrs. Thicknesse's fingers from a child had been accustomed to, but my admiration of it shut out my judgment, and I had long since determined to send it her back with the picture, and so I told Mr. Palmer" (and so he did) adding, "Pray make my peace with Mrs. Thicknesse, and tell her I will finish her picture in my very best manner, and send it her home forthwith." In a few days after, we three met, and they two shook hands and seemed as good friends as ever; but days, weeks, and months passed, and no picture appearing, either at his house or mine, I began to think it then became my turn to be

a little angry, for I suspected, and I suspected right, that he had determined never to touch it more ; and I wrote him a letter and told him so, adding, that Mrs. Thicknesse was certainly entitled to the picture, either from his justice or his generosity—that I would not give a farthing for it, as a mark of his justice, but that if he would send it to me from his generosity, unfinished as it was, I should feel myself obliged to him ; and he sent it as it was ! Nothing but knowing the goodness of his heart, the generosity of his temper, and the particularities of his mind, could ever have made me even speak to him again, after having given me so deadly a blow, for it was a deadly one ; but I knew, though it seemed his act, it did not originate with him. He had been told that I said openly in the public coffee-house at Bath, that when I first knew him at Ipswich, his children were running about the streets there, without shoes or stockings ; but the rascal who told him so, was the villain who robbed the poor from the plate he held at the church door for alms ! That Mr. Gainsborough did not believe me capable of telling so gross a falsehood, I have his authority to

pronounce, for he told me what he said in return. "I acknowledge," said he, "I owe many obligations to Mr. Thicknesse, and I know not any man from whom I could receive acts of friendship with more pleasure," and then made this just remark. "I suppose," said he, "the Doctor knew I now and then made you a present of a drawing, and he meanly thought, by setting us at variance, he might come in for one himself."

'The first time I met Mr. Gainsborough after he had presented me with my own unfinished picture, I saw that concern and shame in his face, which good sense, an upright heart, and conscious errors, always discover. I did not lament the loss of his finishing strokes to my portrait, but grieved that it had ever been begun; he desired I would not let any other painter touch it, and I solemnly assured him it should never be touched, it had, I said, been touched enough and so had I, and then the subject dropt; but every time I went into the room where that scare-crow hung, it gave me so painful a sensation, that I protest it often turned me sick, and in one of those sick fits, I desired Mrs. Thicknesse would return the

picture to Mr. Gainsborough, and that as she had set her heart upon having my full-length portrait I would rather give Mr. Pine his fifty guineas for painting it, than be so daily reminded and sickened at the sight of such a glaring mark of disregard from a man I so much admired, and so affectionately esteemed. This she consented to do, provided I would permit her to send with it a card, expressing her sentiments at the same time, to which I am sorry to say, I too hastily consented. In that card she bid him take his brush, and first rub out the countenance of the truest and warmest friend he ever had, and so done, then blot him for ever from his memory.'

Another aspect of the quarrel is presented by Allan Cunningham, who, repeating traditional family gossip, suggests that Gainsborough paid Mrs. Thicknesse one hundred guineas for the viol, and then found the portrait imposed upon him. Undoubtedly the Governor and his wife were trying acquaintances. But Gainsborough did not hurry to complete some of his gifts. The letters to Unwin are full of apologies for the delay in finishing the portrait of Mrs.

Unwin. This—and a portrait of Captain Saumarez—commenced before 1763, did not get delivered until after 1770.

In a letter to Unwin (Bath, May 25th, 1768) Gainsborough apologised for his neglect in completing Mrs. Unwin's portrait. 'My dear Friend,—If any of my sitters were to appear in half so bad a light as I'm certain I must do in your and Mrs. Unwin's eyes, I should make the devil of them. Ingratitude how ugly—repeated neglects how unpardonable—and yet to write to one so good naturedly ; believe me, my dear Friend, I'm most horridly ashamed of myself. . . . If the People with their damnd Faces would but let me alone a little, I believe I should soon appear in a more tolerable light, but I have been plagued very much.* But in July 1770 he was writing, 'I'm so ashamed to mention Mrs. Unwin's portrait. . . . I'll begin a new one of her. . . . O Lord, that

* In an earlier letter he told Unwin that 'Mrs. Unwin's portrait stands still, still in my painting-room notwithstanding I have the greatest desire to finish it. I have no oftener promised myself the pleasure of sitting down to it but some confounded ugly creature or other have pop'd their heads in my way and hindred me.'

I should behave worst to my best friends. . . . If there is any one Devil uglier than another, 'tis the appearance of Ingratitude.' We do not know that Mrs. Unwin's portrait was ever completed. Thicknesse was suffering from a grievance not very dissimilar.

Mr. W. T. Whitley quotes a remark of Wright of Derby, who settled in Bath shortly after Gainsborough's removal. 'I have heard from London—and from several gentlemen here—that the want of business was the reason for Gainsborough's leaving Bath.' But Gainsborough did not lack commissions in 1773, or indeed at any time during his residence in Bath. In 1765 he told Unwin that he was receiving many offers to undertake portraits in London. 'I have refused frequent invitations to undertake large pictures in town.' These invitations must have increased with his fame.

He left Bath at short notice. In March, Messrs. Broadwood despatched to 'Mr. Gainsborough, Painter in the Circle, Bath,' a harpsichord which had been selected by Giardini. A month later the studio was still open to visitors. The tenancy of the new house in Pall Mall commenced at the

Midsummer quarter, so no time had been lost. Gainsborough had lived fourteen years in Bath ; he was now to spend the last fourteen of his life in London.

CHAPTER III.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERSONAL (*Continued.*)

The London Period, 1774-1788.

GAINSBOROUGH took up his abode at Schomberg House, Pall Mall, the western portion of which he rented at £150 per annum from John Astley, an artist and fellow-student with Reynolds. The eastern wing of the former town mansion of the Dukes of Schomberg was in the occupation of Dr. Graham, an unedifying quack, who had recently moved his Temple of Health from the Adelphi Terrace. This portion of the building has long since been demolished, but Gainsborough's house still stands, outwardly in much the same condition as when the artist was tenant.

Although Gainsborough had many friends in London he seems to have had some difficulty in attracting sitters during the early months of his residence. Bate-Dudley, who

later was to be of such assistance to the painter, says that at the beginning Gainsborough's time was spent 'not very profitably.' Joshua Kirby, one of his oldest friends, died June 20th, 1774, when the Gainsborough family was in the midst of removal, and this sudden calamity must have been a severe trial to the warm-hearted and emotional man.* Thicknesse, despite the quarrel over the portrait, entered the field again, and there is no reason to disbelieve the statement in his memoirs. 'I was much alarmed lest with all his merit and genius, he might be in London a long time before he was properly known to that class of people who alone could *essentially* serve him, for of all the men I ever knew he possessed least of that worldly knowledge to enable him to make his own way into the notice of the *Great World*. I therefore wrote to Lord

* Since 1753, when he gave up house and coach painting in Ipswich, Kirby had become a person of some importance. He had been appointed drawing master to the Prince of Wales, who, upon his accession to the throne as George III, made his old teacher Clerk of the Works at Kew Palace. For a period Kirby was President of the Incorporated Society of Artists.

Bateman, who knew him, and who admired his talents . . . urging him . . . for both our sakes, to give him countenance and make him known, that being all that was necessary. His lordship, for one or both our sakes, did so, and Gainsborough's removal from Bath to London proved as good a move as it was from Ipswich to Bath.'

No exact account can be given of Gainsborough's work at this period. Towards the close of 1774 he was engaged with West and Cipriani in painting decorations for a new concert room. In April 1775 the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester were evidently sitting to him, and about the same time George Selwyn wrote to Lord Carlisle, 'I have been with Mie Mie to Gainsborough to finish her picture.' Mie Mie was the little girl of doubtful parentage who became the wife of the third Marquis of Hertford. Mr. Whitley's researches have unearthed a curious anecdote of Gainsborough's encounter with highwaymen outside Hammersmith on the evening of June 7th, 1775, for which exploit William McAllister was hanged at Tyburn two months later.

In November of the same year Gainsborough wrote an affectionate letter to Mrs. Gibbon, his sister. 'I told Humphry [their brother] you were a rank Methodist, who says you had better be a Presbyterian, but I say Church of England. It does not signify what, if you are but free from hypocrisy, and don't set your heart upon worldly honours and wealth.' On December 26th, 1775, he wrote a long and pathetic letter to the same sister, which hints that despite his worldly success he was not a wholly happy man.

DEAR SISTER,

I received yours and am glad your Houses and everything go on so much to your satisfaction. I have always wish'd you happy, though sometimes we have differ'd a little in our opinions. I did all in my power to comfort poor Humphry, and should have been glad of his company a little longer, had not his business called him hence.

What will become of me time must show ; I can only say that my present situation with regard to encouragement is all that heart can wish, but as all worldly success is precarious I don't build happiness, or the expectation of it, upon present appearances. I have built upon sandy foundations all my life long. All I know is that I live at a full thousand pounds a year expense, and will work hard and do my best to go through withal ; and if that will not do let those take their lot of blame and sufferings that fall short of their duty, both towards

me and themselves. Had I been blessed with your penetration and blind eye towards fool's pleasures, I had steer'd my course better, but we are born with different Passions and gifts, and I have only to hope that the Great Giver of All will make better allowance for us than we can make for one another.

I could now enter into particulars as my heart finds itself affected, but what would it all signify? If I tell you my wife is weak but good, and never much formed to humour my Happiness, what can you do to alter her? If I complain that Peggy is a sensible good Girl, but Insolent and proud in her behaviour to me at times, can you make your arm long enough to box her ears for me whilst you live at Bath? And (what has hurt me most of late) were I to unfold a secret and tell you that I have detected a sly trick in Molly by a sight I got of one of her letters, forsooth, to Mr. Fischer, what could all your cleverness do for me there? and yet I wish for your Head-piece to catch a little more of the secret, for I don't choose to be flung under the pretence of Friendship. I have never suffered that worthy Gentleman ever to be in their Company since I came to London; and behold while I had my eye upon Peggy, the other Slyboots, I suppose has all along been the Object. Oh, d—n him, he must take care how he trips me off the foot of all happiness.

I desire, my Dear Sister, you will not impart a syllable of what you have here, and believe me ever yours most affectionately,

THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.

December 26, 1775.

Compliments of this happy season to you and love to Sally.

P.S.—She does not suspect I saw the letter.

This letter refers to a personal incident

which gave the artist considerable uneasiness. In the Bath correspondence, in a paragraph about music and musicians, there is a reference, to 'Fischer's dexterity, quickness, &c.' John Christian Fischer was a celebrated player on the oboe, who made an immediate impression in England upon his arrival from Germany. That Fischer paid attention to both the Miss Gainsboroughs is probable. Although the artist's suspicions had been aroused in 1775 the matter gave no cause for alarm. The sudden marriage of Fischer to Mary Gainsborough five years later was an unexpected shock, although Gainsborough's own marriage was clandestine.

The marriage took place at St. Anne's, Soho, on February 21st, 1780, in the presence of Gainsborough and his wife, and Gainsborough Dupont. On February 23rd, Gainsborough wrote to his sister :

DEAR SISTER,

I imagine you are by this time no stranger to the alteration which has taken place in my family. The notice I had of it was very sudden as I had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply settled ; and as it was too late for me to alter anything without being the cause of total unhappiness on both sides, my *consent*, which was a mere compliment to affect to ask, I needs must

give, whether such a match was agreeable to me or not. I would not have the cause of unhappiness lay upon my conscience, and accordingly they were married last Monday, and are settled for the present in a ready-furnished little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair.

I can't say I have any reason to doubt the man's honesty or goodness of heart, as I never heard any one speak anything amiss of him; and as to his oddities and temper she must learn to like them as she likes his person, for nothing can be altered now. I pray God she may be happy with him and have her health. Peggy has been very unhappy about it, but I endeavour to comfort her, in hope that she will have more pride and goodness than to do anything without first asking my advice and approbation. We shall see how they go on, and I shall write to you further upon the subject. I hope you are all well, and with best wishes, I remain, your affectionate brother,

THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.

This marriage added to the domestic complications of the household in Pall Mall. Mrs. Gainsborough was a lady of capricious temper, who did not forget that she was of distinguished if mysterious race, and also heiress to £200 a year. Her parsimonious inclinations were praiseworthy, but they must have jarred upon the open-handed and generous instincts of her husband's character. 'Gainsborough,' wrote Henry Angelo, 'afraid of his wife and consequently ill at ease at home, was not entirely

comfortable abroad lest his Xantippe should discover what he expended on his rambles. It is true he was no economist of his cash, but the parsimony of his lady was beyond the endurance of any man possessing the least spirit of liberality, and Gainsborough was liberal to excess. Fischer, who, on the contrary, was anything rather than an uxorious spouse, used to banter his father-in-law upon this submission.' Fischer described his mother-in-law as 'receiver-general, paymaster-general and auditor of her own accompts.' She undoubtedly accumulated during her husband's lifetime a considerable sum of money, unknown to the spendthrift artist. She kept her accounts very cleverly, and Gainsborough admitted on his death-bed 'that he sometimes thought he had more bills than he found, and had been puzzled about it, but never suspected she had made free with what now made his death-bed one of tranquillity and peace.' Mrs. Gainsborough managed her affairs with much financial genius, and even her husband's pocket expenditure was not free from criticism. When he took a coach home to Pall Mall he always used to alight

and dismiss it round the corner in St. James's Square to avoid his wife's criticism.

The two daughters, Margaret and Mary, were uncertain and odd in behaviour. They were handsome and accomplished, but they inherited a full share of the eccentricity which marked the Gainsborough race. In 1771 Margaret had been ill, and Dr. Moysey, who attended her, was reported by John Palmer (in a letter to Garrick) to have declared that she suffered from 'a family complaint, and he did not suppose she would ever recover her senses again ; so that Gainsborough was obliged to call in Schomberg and Charlton, who called it by its right name, a delirious fever, and soon cured her.' Both sisters were unstable, and Mrs. Fischer's later life was saddened by a complete mental breakdown.

Gainsborough's friends suggested that the painter's own conduct was at times unbalanced. This side of his character must not be forgotten when we attempt to arrive at the truth of the quarrel with Philip Thicknesse, or the long-continued dissensions with the Royal Academy. From another point of view Mrs. Gainsborough

had not unreasonable cause for complaint. In a letter written from Schomberg House Gainsborough explained how his wife and daughters had travelled in coach to Ipswich, but had returned earlier than had been arranged. 'I don't know what's the matter; either people don't pay them honour enough for ladies that keep a coach, or else Madam is afraid to trust me alone in this great town.' If some of the stories be true Gainsborough was not to be trusted alone. Probably the unsympathetic atmosphere of his own home drove him elsewhere to seek recreation which was lively if not commendable.

Fischer's portrait was exhibited at the Academy of 1780. The young household broke up in a few months. Fischer was a nervous and irritable musician, whilst his wife was notoriously difficult. The oboe player became well known in London circles, for he was a prominent member of the royal band. Fanny Burney speaks of the 'sweet-flowing, melting, celestial notes of Fischer's hautboy' in the saloons of Windsor. But the romance of Mary Gainsborough's life soon evaporated, and Gainsborough so

devised his will that the money left to Mary Fischer should not be subject to 'the debts, power, control, or intermeddling' of the husband from whom she was parted.

Gainsborough's disagreement with the Royal Academy was more in the nature of a series of sharp disconnected combats than a continued campaign. He was one of the thirty-six original members. In 1773 he appears to have disagreed with Reynolds, if we accept Horace Walpole's note in his catalogue of the exhibition for that year. Mr. Whitley suggests that Reynolds would not hang Gainsborough's portrait of the Countess Waldegrave, the character of the lady being the subject of serious recrimination amongst the members of the royal family. In 1777 Gainsborough re-appeared on the walls, and his canvases rivalled the supremacy of the President. Mr. Whitley identifies the *Portrait of a lady* with the magnificent *Hon. Mrs. Graham*, now in the National Gallery at Edinburgh, a canvas which must always rank amongst the masterpieces of portrait painting. In 1778 he exhibited eleven portraits and two landscapes. 'It should appear,' wrote a



National Gallery of Scotland

THE HON. MRS. GRAHAM

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 96)

contemporary journalist, 'from this artist's female portraits that he is a favourite among the demireps. He has, it is plain, been visited by Miss Dalrymple, Clara Haywood, and another well-known character of the same stamp. The likenesses in the three pictures are remarkably strong, and as the real faces of the ladies we have mentioned have not been seen by the world for many a year, they were very fit subjects for Mr. Gainsborough's pencil, since he is rather apt to put that sort of complexion upon the countenances of his female portraits which is laughingly described in *The School for Scandal* as "coming in the morning and going away at night," than to blend what is, properly speaking, Nature's own red and white.'

Gainsborough exhibited in 1779, and when the Royal Academy opened its doors for the first time in Somerset House in 1780, he contributed ten portraits and six landscapes. In 1781 portraits of the King and Queen, the Bishop of Lichfield, *A Shepherd*, and three landscapes appeared. Complaints were repeated that he had not been treated fairly by the hanging committee. 'The works

of this artist ' (wrote a critic) ' have always been prejudiced by being hung too near or too far from the eye. The distance should be proportioned not to the size of the picture but to the finishing, the light and the shadow.' In 1780 a landscape was suspended over the door of the great room at Somerset House. In 1781 another landscape was hung close to the ground.

The summer exhibition of 1782 included fifteen canvases by Reynolds and eleven from Gainsborough's studio. The *Girl with Pigs* was bought by Sir Joshua, who sent a hundred guineas and many compliments to the artist. Gainsborough sent word to the President that ' it could not fail to afford him the highest satisfaction that he had brought his pigs to so fair a market.' Reynolds described this canvas as ' by far the best picture Gainsborough ever painted, or perhaps ever will.' After the artist's death he sold the *Girl with Pigs* to M. de Calonne for three hundred guineas. W. T. Parke writes in his *Memoirs*: ' being acquainted with Gainsborough at the period when this work was in progress I have seen at his house in Pall Mall the three little pigs (who did not

in the common phrase sit for their likenesses) gambolling about his painting room, whilst he at his easel was catching an attitude or a leer from them.'

Despite the friendly relationship between Reynolds and Gainsborough—the President was sitting for his portrait at Schomberg House during the autumn of this year—the quarrel between the Academy and its irascible member was approaching a crisis. When Gainsborough took up residence in London in 1774 he was placed on the Council. But he refused, or neglected, to attend, and took no active part in the management of the institution. In 1783 he sent to Somerset House for the ensuing exhibition portraits of the Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Horatia Waldegrave, the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Sandwich, Sir Harbord Harbord, Sir Charles Gould, Mrs. Sheridan, and Mr. Ramus, together with a landscape, a seapiece, and *Two Shepherd Boys with Fighting Dogs*. In addition he forwarded fifteen portraits of members of the royal family, painted at Windsor in the preceding autumn. Over these portraits the storm broke. The *Lady Horatia Waldegrave*, a

work of most exquisite grace, was placed against the chimney-board of the fireplace. Gainsborough was furious, endeavoured to withdraw all his pictures, but, being overpersuaded, left the Council in great wrath.

The portraits of the royal family had to be treated with more consideration. Gainsborough instructed the secretary exactly how he desired them placed. He also addressed the following letter to the Council :

Mr. Gainsborough presents his compliments to the Gentlemen appointed to hang the pictures at the Royal Academy ; and begs leave to *hint* to them that if the Royal Family, which he has sent for the Exhibition (*being smaller than three quarters*) are hung above the line with full-lengths he never more, while he breathes, will send another picture to the Exhibition. This he swears by God. Saturday morn.

The hint was taken, and the fifteen portraits were arranged in three rows of five as the artist had designed.

In 1784 Gainsborough had eighteen to twenty portraits ready for exhibition. One consisted of a portrait group of the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth, which had been painted for a panel in one of the state rooms at Carlton

House. In the gallery at Somerset House full-length portraits were placed on the wall above the level of the top of the doorway, so that the base of a frame would be some nine feet above the floor. Gainsborough wrote to the Council on the 10th of April, and the letter was evidently received whilst that body was sitting :

Mr. Gainsborough's compliments to the gentlemen of the Committee, and begs pardon for giving them so much trouble, but as he has painted the picture of the Princesses in so tender a light, that notwithstanding he approves very much of the established line for strong effects, he cannot possibly consent to have it placed higher than five feet and a half, because the likenesses and work of the picture will not be seen any higher ; therefore at a word he will not trouble the gentlemen against their inclination, but will beg the rest of the pictures back again. Saturday evening.

The pictures were already in position, the Hanging Committee being (according to Mr. Whitley) Agostine Carlini, John Richards, Francis Milner Newton, M. W. Peters, and George Dance. According to one contemporary report Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir William Chambers were favourable to Gainsborough's request that this canvas should be placed no higher than the position

for which it had been designed at Carlton House. But the reply of the Council was sent to Pall Mall the same evening, and its decision was drastic.

Saturday evening, nine o'clock.

SIR,—In compliance with your request the Council have ordered your pictures to be taken down, and to be delivered to your order whenever you send for them.

F. M. NEWTON, *Secretary*.

Gainsborough never exhibited at the Academy again. From time to time the contemporary press published rumours of a reconciliation, but the successive exhibitions at Somerset House lacked examples of the genius in Pall Mall. Had he lived the breach would unquestionably have been healed, for Gainsborough voted at Academy elections in December 1787 and March 1788. In the winter of 1787 he even offered to paint a picture for the chimney of the Council Room. The *Romantic Landscape with Sheep at a Fountain*, now in the Diploma Gallery, was presented by Margaret Gainsborough 'in compliance with the intention of her late father,' and the portrait of the artist by himself, belonging to the Academy, was also

a gift from the same lady. The Academicians gave Margaret Gainsborough a silver cup in recognition of her gift of the landscape, and as witness of their appreciation of 'so inestimable an addition to their collection, and as a mark of the high respect they have for the Memory of her Father.'

But Gainsborough found it necessary to have some method of exhibiting to the world his current works. Along the passages and corridors of Schomberg House were hung the landscapes—which until the last years of Gainsborough's life, did not meet with a ready sale. Other rooms were arranged as an exhibition of the artist's portrait work, and the first collection was brought together and opened to the public at the end of July in 1784. This gallery was not closed until Gainsborough's death in 1788.

The death of Allan Ramsay in August 1784 left vacant the office of Portrait-Painter to the King. Ramsay had held this court appointment since 1767. George III did not like Reynolds, and, in 1764, when the office of Court Painter became vacant at the death of Hogarth, Reynolds was disregarded and the post given to Ramsay.

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Mr. Whitley suggests with reason that Gainsborough may have thought himself entitled to the post, which, in 1784, was conferred upon Sir Joshua.* Gainsborough gave no sign of resentment at having been passed over, although he had been in close contact with the various members of the royal family since his early years in London. Possibly thoughts of exalted patronage induced him to remove from Bath to London, and Kirby drew George the Third's attention to the merits of Gainsborough as a portrait-painter whilst the latter was still a resident of Bath. Kirby's death delayed Gainsborough's introduction to the Court, which was not at any time deeply interested in art. In the first eight years of his reign George III did not give a single commission to an artist. His favourite painter—if he can be said to have had a favourite—was Benjamin West.

* In a letter, said to have been written by Gainsborough in 1776, reference is made to an idea that the artist should paint the signboard of an inn. 'I have a great mind to paint one, but perhaps it would be considered *infra dig* in an R.A. and perhaps future President.' Had Gainsborough any thought of succeeding Reynolds? But the authenticity of this letter has been questioned.

The exact date when King George and Queen Charlotte first sat to the artist is uncertain. Fulcher says that 'before Gainsborough had been many months in London he received a summons to the Palace.' This statement Mr. Whitley contests, quoting a letter from Gainsborough to the Hon. Thomas Stratford in 1777: 'If I ever have anything to do at St. James's, it must be through your interest and singular affection for me.' His earliest royal sitters must have been the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, who were visiting Schomberg House in April 1775. Two years later he was painting another brother and sister-in-law of the King—the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland. With George, Prince of Wales, he was soon on professional terms, and Queen Charlotte and the princesses visited his studio. In 1781 full-length portraits of the King and Queen attracted much attention at Somerset House. Horace Walpole thought the King's portrait 'very like, but stiff and raw.' Gainsborough was always praised for the vivid resemblance of his portraits to the sitters, a quality Sir Joshua did not enjoy to so marked a degree. A portrait of Prince William Henry,

afterwards William IV, was a direct commission from the King. In the autumn of 1782 Gainsborough was called to Windsor, where he painted fifteen portraits of the royal family. Of these young people he had a high opinion. "Talk of the Greeks?" he cried. "Pale-faced, long-nosed ghosts! Look at the living delectable countenances in the royal progeny." These portraits were of the same dimensions, giving bust portraits life size. They were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783, and were not received with unqualified approbation. The quarrel over the hanging of the *Three Princesses* in 1784, painted for the Prince of Wales, led to his withdrawal from the Academy exhibitions, but Gainsborough did not suffer in the estimation of his patrons. Princess Augusta described him as 'a great favourite with all the Royal Family,' which Reynolds never was. King George took a lively interest in his doings. One day, as the artist was painting a royal portrait, he told the King that painters should be employed to design the fashions for women's dress.

"You are right, Mr. Gainsborough. Why

do not you and Sir Joshua set about it, hey ? But the ladies are beautiful enough as it is—what ? Hey, Mr. Gainsborough, hey, hey ? ”

“ Yes, and please your Majesty, it were as well to leave the dowdy angels alone.”

With the smaller rival court surrounding the Prince of Wales Gainsborough was always on the friendliest terms. In 1785 he received a commission from Thomas Coke of Holkham to paint an equestrian portrait of the Prince which was to hang by the side of Van Dyck's portrait of the Duc d'Arenberg in the same owner's possession. In 1786 the Prince purchased a second landscape from the artist. He also commissioned the portrait group of the *Three Eldest Princesses* for the grand drawing-room at Carlton House, where it was to hang in company of many other portraits of the royal family by the same artist.

Gainsborough's activity during the fourteen years of his life in London was unfailing. His list of sitters includes the names of many of the distinguished men and women of his time. As a whole the circle was small and exclusive. He was certainly the favourite portrait-painter at Windsor Castle and the

Queen's Palace; the peerage, the county families, the navy and the army passed continually through his painting room. The rest of the world did not trouble him. He had no lucrative connection with the City, although he painted the Clerks to the Haberdashers and the Drapers in 1787. He painted two or three musicians for his own pleasure; and he did not forget three actors, Garrick, Quin, and Henderson. He never completed Reynolds's portrait, and—with the exception of Sheridan, and possibly Goldsmith—he did not paint a single man of letters. Bate-Dudley was a personal friend as well as a journalist. He was essentially the painter of fashion, and possibly he painted that brilliant life all the better because he was not a part of it.

A steady succession of portrait commissions prevented him from giving much time to his landscapes. But he generally had on his easels one of the large 'fancy pictures,' as Hazlitt called them. The subjects belonged to a *genre* of mixed inspiration. Gainsborough greatly admired Murillo, and his canvases of beggar children and peasants owe their origin to a close study of the

Spanish master. George Morland and Gainsborough were probably friends. They are said to have collaborated in the production of a landscape with cattle. Their social tastes were akin. Traces of the Morland imagination are to be found in the 'fancy pictures' which were painted during the Pall Mall period. The *Shepherd Boy* was exhibited at the Academy in 1781. 'The *Shepherd Boy* in a tempestuous scene is evidently the *chef d'œuvre* of this great artist,' wrote Bate-Dudley in the *Morning Herald*, 'a composition in which the numberless beauties of design, drawing and colouring are so admirably blended as to excite the admiration of every beholder.' In 1782 he was at work upon a *Cottage Girl*, and the same year produced the *Woodcutter's Home*. The success of the *Girl with Pigs* at the same year's Academy has already been referred to. The Academy of 1783 included *Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting*. Gainsborough wrote to Sir Thomas Chambers, R.A.: 'I sent my Fighting Dogs to divert you. I believe next exhibition I shall make the boys fighting and the dogs looking on; you know my cunning way of avoiding great subjects

in painting, and of concealing my ignorance by a flash in the pan. . . . If I can pick pockets in the portrait way two or three years longer I intend to sneak into a cot, and turn a serious fellow. I know you think me right and can look down upon a Cock-Sparrow with compassion.'

However, Gainsborough did not exhibit at the Academy again. His private gallery at Schomberg House contained in 1784 a picture entitled the *Beggar Boys*, the models having been found in the alleys close to Pall Mall, and in the spring of 1785 he completed the *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*. 'Gainsborough's barefoot child on her way to the well, with her little dog under her arm, is unequalled by anything of the kind in the world,' wrote C. R. Leslie. Present-day criticism will probably incline more to Hazlitt's complaint—'there is a regular insipidity, a systematic vacancy, a round, unvaried smoothness, to which real nature is a stranger, and which is only an idea existing in the painter's mind.' Later in the year he completed *Rustic Amusement*, or *Cottage Children with the Ass*, the models for both this and the earlier work having

been found at Richmond, where Gainsborough had a house. In 1786 he was at work upon a picture of a cottage girl and pigs, and another subject of the same date, which appears to have been catalogued as the *Girl with Milk*, passed into the collection of Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet.

At this period Gainsborough was working at high pressure, and Mr. Whitley quotes a valuable note from the *Morning Herald*, evidently written by the parson-journalist, which reveals the painter's prosperity. The landscapes and 'fancy pictures' were rapidly selling from the walls of the gallery at Schomberg House. 'When the room is thus stripped of its best ornaments little else will remain to gratify the visiting eye; and when the loss will be supplied who can determine? No respite, it seems, can be allowed the artist from portrait painting; and because he has lately advanced his terms he is more sought after than ever. His prices are now forty guineas for a three-quarters, eighty guineas for a half-length, and a hundred and sixty for a full-length. Sir Joshua's charges, are, however, still higher.'

In June 1787 Gainsborough was painting the last of his 'fancy pictures'—a canvas he asked Sir Joshua Reynolds to inspect when he was on his death-bed a year later. The *Woodman* was clearly influenced in its composition by Murillo's *St. John in the Wilderness*, which Gainsborough bought in the spring of the same year. Bate-Dudley grandiloquently described it. 'This wonderful memorial of genius is a portrait' (he writes), 'the original being a poor smith worn out by labour, and now a pensioner upon accidental charity. Mr. Gainsborough was struck with his careworn aspect and took him home; he enabled the needy wanderer by his generosity to live—and made him immortal by his art! He painted him in the character of a woodman; and to account for his dejected visage introduced a violent storm. He appears sheltering under a tree; at a small distance in the background his cottage is seen. The action of his dog, who is starting with his head reversed, is well expressive of a momentary burst of thunder. A brilliancy of colour on the woodman's rustic weeds is also descriptive of the lightning's flash.' After Gainsborough's

death the *Woodman* was purchased for five hundred guineas by Lord Gainsborough. The *Woodman* was destroyed by fire in 1810, but we can realise its quality by Simon's engraving.

Three pictures of the London period belong to a class alone. The *Mall, St. James's Park*, was dated by Fulcher as having been painted in the year 1786, but Mr. Whitley's invaluable researches amongst the files of contemporary newspapers have established 1783 as the exact date. 'Gainsborough' (wrote one journalist) 'is working on a magnificent picture in a style new to his hand; a park with a number of figures walking in it. To the connoisseur the most compendious information is to say that it comes nearest to the manner of Watteau, but to say no more it is Watteau far out-done.' It was thought that the King would add this picture to the royal collection, but it was unsold at the time of the artist's death. *The Morning Walk*, a full-length portrait group of Mr. and Mrs. Hallet, was painted in the autumn of 1785. It gave Théophile Gautier 'a strange retrospective sensation, so intense is the

illusion it produces of the spirit of the eighteenth century. We really fancy we see the young couple walking arm in arm along a garden avenue.' An oval portrait group represents the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland walking in a garden (either Kew or Windsor), with the duchess's sister, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, seated in the background. At the sale after Gainsborough's death Queen Charlotte bought this delightful composition, most probably at the catalogued price—one hundred guineas. The Council of the Royal Academy had also decided to buy it, if unsold at the close of the exhibition.

Northcote, in a conversation with Hazlitt, described the *Mall* as 'all in motion and in a flutter like a lady's fan.' Sir Walter Armstrong says that it at least equals Watteau's *Embarkment for Cytherea* in the small class to which they both belong. 'It embodies the emotion excited by the scene, and makes visible for us the moving, indefinite, and most personal impression left on the sensory apparatus of the artist.' And this critic considers that if the *Mall* is the shallowest of all great Gainsboroughs it is deeper than

a Watteau. He adds that in the *Mall* and *The Morning Walk* Gainsborough consciously measured himself against Watteau and Rubens. In the *Mall* and the Cumberland group the English artist curiously reminds us of the work of Hubert Robert, a Frenchman who has had to wait long enough for the appreciation which is his due.*

Now, although Gainsborough worked for a short while under a Frenchman who belonged to the Watteau circle, it is doubtful if he ever saw a Watteau canvas. It is hard to believe that the two Watteau subjects sold in London in 1754 suddenly inspired him thirty years later. Gainsborough probably visited Flanders and studied Van Dyck and Rubens on their own ground; there is no record that he ever visited France—not even a suggestion or a hint in his correspondence. The Linleys and the Sheridans often made the journey from Bath to Paris, and Gainsborough

* Gainsborough seems to have influenced Goya. This, in discussion, is admitted by many Spanish artists and critics. But how could Goya have studied Gainsborough? The only possible suggestion can be that he came across the English mezzotints.

himself was a rapid traveller when occasion required. Transit from London to Paris was tiring but not over exacting. Could so enthusiastic a lover of the arts ever have resisted the adventure? The question must remain unanswered.

‘Sweeping assertions are risky,’ wrote Sir Walter Armstrong, ‘but I do not think there is much danger in declaring the portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Hallet, now christened more conveniently *The Morning Walk*, to be the finest picture painted in the eighteenth century; if I followed my own conviction I should say since the deaths of Rubens and Velazquez.’ It is the more wonderful if Gainsborough knew nothing of contemporary French art. But it is distinctively English, and could never be assigned to any other school of painting.

The group of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland with Lady Elizabeth Luttrell is a delicate fantasy which stands alone in English art. In these three compositions Gainsborough painted for the pure joy of painting. They show no sign of conscious effort; they are improvisations as a composer improvises on the keyboard. And

in the *Mall* and the Cumberland group the artist deals with his sitters as a stage manager of a marionette theatre treats his puppets. Gainsborough the realist pulls the strings wherever his imagination leads him. William Jackson said that 'all the female figures in his Park-scene Gainsborough drew from a doll of his own creation.' William Collins, R.A., owned a little model of a woman dressed by Gainsborough's own hand. The atmosphere of the *Mall* and the Cumberland group is the atmosphere of the theatre. Foliage is suggested with transparent grace, and limpid touch. These are the dreams of a great artist, and they belong to no workaday world.

The *Diana and Actæon* at Windsor is unfinished and unusual, for Gainsborough rarely attempted the nude. *Musidora* (in the National Gallery) is by legend associated with the name of Lady Hamilton. In the eastern wing of Schomberg House, Dr. Graham held his 'Temple of Health,' which excited the unhealthy curiosity of London society. Emma Hart was always said to have been one of the demonstrators in this semi-medical exhibition. Gainsborough

was not likely to allow a beautiful model to live next door to him without making some attempt to entice her into his studio.

The later years have no other record than that of hard work. In the spring of 1788 Gainsborough was in his usual health, and, as usual, extremely occupied in his studio. A portrait of Lady Petre was finished early in April, and, during the same month, he was working upon a portrait of Mr. Howard, her brother.

During the earlier part of this year the trial of Warren Hastings at Westminster Hall had been attracting the whole of London, and one of the spectators was Gainsborough. According to the story as told by Fulcher, the artist was sitting with his back to an open window, when he suddenly felt something inconceivably cold touch his neck, followed by a feeling of stiffness and pain. Mrs. Gainsborough called in Dr. Heberden and Mr. John Hunter. They declared that the trouble was a swelling in the glands which would pass as the weather improved. Gainsborough, himself, thought little of his illness, and left London for the cottage he



National Gallery, Millbank

MUSIDORA BATHING HER FEET

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 118)

rented at Richmond. In May he was painting a landscape.

Allan Cunningham tells a story that in 1787, during a dinner with Sir George Beaumont and Sheridan, Gainsborough took Sheridan by the hand, led him out of the room, and said, "Now don't laugh, but listen. I shall die soon—I know it—I feel it—I have less time to live than my looks infer—but for this I care not. What oppresses me is this—I have many acquaintances and few friends; and as I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave, I am desirous of bespeaking you—will you come—aye or no?" Sheridan made the promise, 'and the looks of Gainsborough cleared up like the sunshine of one of his own landscapes.'

Such thoughts cross the mind of every thinking man, and the anecdote is far from improbable. But Farington's diary gives new information. For five or six years before his death Gainsborough had suffered from a growth on the back of his neck, which was thought to be of a non-malignant nature. The chill caught in Westminster Hall was the beginning of a fatal illness, for which he

was not unprepared. On June 15th he wrote: 'It is my strict charge that after my decease no plaster cast, model, or likeness whatever be permitted to be taken. But that if Mr. Sharp, who engraved Mr. Hunter's print, should choose to make a print from the three-quarter sketch which I intended for Mr. Abel, painted by myself, I give free consent.' His will had been signed on May 5th.

He was now a dying man, for the swelling in the neck had revealed itself as of a cancerous nature. His friends visited him. To Samuel Kilderbee of Ipswich, his fellow-tourist in the Lake district, he expressed regret for the lightness of his life. Like many men in his position he probably exaggerated the extent of his transgression. 'They must take me altogether,' he added. 'Liberal, thoughtless, and dissipated.' When Jackson came from Exeter, he remarked that he was leaving life just as he was beginning to do something. To Jackson, or to Reynolds, he uttered the famous phrase, 'We are all going to Heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company.' Cunningham says that these were his last words.

His final interview with Reynolds is infinitely pathetic. At the end of July he wrote the following letter :

DEAR SIR JOSHUA,

I am just to write what I fear you will not read—after lying in a dying state for 6 months. The extreme affection which I am informed of by a Friend which Sir Joshua has expressed induces me to beg a last favour, which is to come once under my Roof and look at my things, my woodman you never saw, if what I ask now is not disagreeable to your feeling that I may have the honour to speak to you. I can from a sincere Heart say that I always admired and sincerely loved Sir Joshua Reynolds.

THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

Mr. Whitley suggests that Gainsborough was so sick that he had lost all count of time, and that he was wrong in stating that his illness had lasted six months. But the six months dates back to the opening of the trial at Westminster Hall, where Gainsborough believed he had been struck by his fatal malady.

Sir Joshua referred to this conversation in the Fourteenth Discourse which he delivered to the students of the Royal Academy in December of the same year. ' Without entering into a detail of what

passed at this last interview ' (he told the Academy) ' the impression of it upon my mind was, that his regret at losing life, was principally the regret of leaving his art ; and more especially as he now began, he said, to see what his deficiencies were ; which, he said, he flattered himself in his last works were in some nature supplied.'

Gainsborough died at Schomberg House about two o'clock in the morning of Saturday, August 2nd, 1788, being only a few months past his sixty-first birthday. He had desired ' to be privately buried in Kew churchyard, near the grave of his friend Joshua Kirby ; that a stone, without either arms or ornament, might be placed over him, inscribed with his bare name, and containing space for the names of such of his family, who after his death, might wish to take up their abode with him ; and that his funeral might be as private as possible, attended only by a few of those friends he most respected.' The tiny graveyard on Kew Green was familiar to him. He had often lodged at his sister's house on the Green, and the church stands close to the road which led to his cottage at Richmond.

On the Saturday following his death Gainsborough's body was carried to Kew, and buried in a grave next to that of Joshua Kirby. The pall-bearers were Sir William Chambers, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, Bartolozzi, Paul Sandby, and Samuel Cotes. Five were Academicians, proof that the old quarrel had long been forgotten. Cotes was a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists, of which Joshua Kirby had been the President, and from which Gainsborough resigned in 1768. Gainsborough Dupont, the nephew, was chief mourner, and with him attended Richard Brinsley Sheridan; Thomas Linley the elder, the musician, and Sheridan's father-in-law; Jeremiah Meyer, the miniature painter; Gossett, a modeller in wax; and James Trimmer of Brentford, the son-in-law of Joshua Kirby.

Gainsborough's property must have been about £10,000, the sum at which his wife's estate was proved after her death in 1798. Half his money was bequeathed to his daughter Margaret, the remaining portion being held in trust for the benefit of Mary Fischer. His executors were asked to give

to Dupont all the equipment of his painting room together with £100 in settlement of any claims the nephew might have against the estate. The contents of the studio were placed upon public exhibition from March to the end of May 1789. The prices in the catalogue were comparatively high, and a large number of pictures remained on hand to be included in the sale held by Mr. Christie at Schomberg House in June 1792. After the sale Mrs. Gainsborough and her daughters removed to 63 Sloane Street, and Gainsborough Dupont went to live at Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, where he died, January 20th, 1797. Mrs. Gainsborough died at Sloane Street in December 1798. The daughters were living at Brook Green, Hammersmith, in 1803, and removed to Acton. In 1818 Mrs. Dupuis described Miss Gainsborough as 'odd,' her sister 'quite deranged.' Margaret Gainsborough died December 18, 1820; Mary Fischer outlived them all, dying in July 1826. Her estate passed to Suffolk cousins, for the line of Thomas Gainsborough was now extinct.

CHAPTER IV.

STYLE, DEVELOPMENT, AND CHARACTERISTICS.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH'S features have come down to us in several portraits of his own painting, and a most excellent portrait by Zoffany. A curious caricature drawing will be found at South Kensington. Fulcher describes him as 'handsome, of a fair complexion, regular features, tall, and well-proportioned. His forehead, though not high, was broad and strongly marked, his nose Roman, his mouth and eye denoting humour and refinement—the general expression of his face thoughtful, yet not altogether pleasant.' The description, with the exception of the final sentence, is supported by the portraits. Gainsborough appears more florid than fair, with a suspicion of impetuous irritability and quickness of temper, which, however, never degenerated into sullenness or excited passion. His anger was soon appeased, and he seems to have been over conscientious about his shortcomings and weaknesses.

He was generous to a fault. He distributed drawings to all his friends with lavish hand. A tale of distress would quickly unbutton his purse. He gave Colonel Hamilton a valuable landscape for playing a single solo on the violin. His friend Wiltshire, the carrier between Bath and London, was given picture after picture.

In conversation he was lively and overbrimming with repartee, yet we are told that he was a shy man, and much given to blushing. Fulcher, who collected local gossip, which must not be altogether set aside, says that his gossip sometimes bordered on the licentious. The age was coarser than our own, and broadness is in many cases simply a reaction against over-refinement. Gainsborough was not a bookman. 'I am well read in the volume of nature, and that is learning enough for me,' occurs in a letter. If he neglected letters, he loved his art, and he loved music. His ideal was to live in a small village under a blue sky, to paint 'landskips,' and to play the viol-da-gamba. Every musician was his friend—Abel, Fischer, Giardini, Jackson, John Christian Bach, the Linleys, Tenducci and a dozen others. The British

Museum owns a slight but delightful drawing which chronicles a musical evening. One student in the Print Room likes to imagine that it represents a cheerful and melodious gathering under Gainsborough's own roof.*

Opinion varied concerning his skill as a musician. 'Gainsborough's profession was painting, and music was his amusement,' wrote Jackson of Exeter, 'yet there were times when music seemed to be his employment and painting his diversion.' Jackson was rather contemptuous of the amateur, and said his friend did not know his notes. Bate-Dudley, on the contrary, asserts that Gainsborough played the viol-da-gamba 'with the most exquisite skill, truth, and

* Margaret Gainsborough was a talented musician. Pyne gives the following description of a musical night, too characteristic to be omitted: 'The two enthusiasts, Gainsborough and Fischer, sometimes left their spouses, mama and daughter, each to sleep away more than half the night alone. For one would get at his flageolet . . . and the other at his viol-da-gamba, and have such an inveterate set-to, that, as Mrs. Gainsborough said, a gang of robbers might have stripped the house, and set it on fire to boot, and the gentlemen never been the wiser. Caleb Whiteford said he never met with fellows that, like them, lost all reckoning of time, when timing it to their cat-gut and tootle-too.'

expression ; and in an adagio movement, or largo, his richness of tone, expression, and feeling brought him very near to Abel's standard.' This evidence is supported by several contemporaries, and the elder Rimbault, a professional musician, told his son that the artist was a talented player on the harpsichord. Farington, in the famous diary, sententiously observes : ' He was passionately fond of music . . . and this led him much into company with musicians, with whom he often exceeded the bounds of temperance and his health suffered from it, being occasionally unable to work for a week after. He was irregular in his application, sometimes not working for 3 or 4 weeks together, and then for a month would apply with great diligence.'

Farington also gives the following vivid little sketch of the artist in his painting room : ' Bourgeois told me he knew Gainsborough extremely well. One day he called on him and saw a half-length portrait, and was struck with the haughty expression of the countenance, and observed it to Gainsborough, who expressed satisfaction at the remark as it proved he had hit the character.

Gainsborough, said it was a portrait of Mr. Pitt, who he said came the day before to sit for his picture, and on coming into the painting room sat down in the sitter's chair and taking out a book began to read. Gainsborough, struck with the hauteur and disrespectful manner of Mr. Pitt, treated him in this way. He took up his palette and seeming to be trifling among his colours, began carelessly to hum toll, loll de roll, on hearing which Mr. Pitt recollected himself, shut his book, and sat in a proper manner.

‘Gainsborough was very familiar and loose in his conversation to his intimate acquaintance, but knew his own value, was reserved, and maintained an importance with his sitters, such as neither Beechey or Hoppner can preserve. With all his apparent carelessness Gainsborough knew mankind well, and adapted himself to their humours.’

Ozias Humphrey, R.A., who lived at Bath, has left in his *Memoirs* an account of Gainsborough's methods of work. His portraits, writes Humphrey, ‘as well as his landscapes, were frequently wrought by candle-light, and generally with great force and likeness. But his painting room—even by day a kind

of darkened twilight—had scarcely any light, and I have seen him, whilst his subjects have been sitting to him, when neither they nor the pictures were scarcely discernible.

‘ If the canvases were of three-quarter size he did not desire they should be loosened upon the straining frames, but if they were half-lengths or whole-lengths he never failed to paint with the canvas loose, secured by small cords, and brought to the extremity of the frame, and having previously determined and marked with chalk upon what part of the canvas the face was to be painted it was so placed upon the easel as to be close to the subject he was painting ; which gave him an opportunity (as he commonly painted standing) of comparing the dimensions and effect of the copy with the original, both near and at a distance. By this method, with incessant study and exertion, he acquired the power of giving the masses and general forms of his models with the utmost exactness. Having thus settled the groundwork of his portraits he let in (of necessity) more light for the finishing of them ; but his correct preparation was of the last importance and enabled him to

secure the proportion of his features, as well as the general contour of objects, with uncommon truth.' Reynolds referred in his *Discourse* to Gainsborough's habit of painting by candle-light.

J. T. Smith, who visited the painting room at Pall Mall, says, 'I was much surprised to see him sometimes paint portraits with pencils on sticks full six feet in length, and his method of using them was this: he placed himself and his canvas at a right angle with the sitter, so that he stood still and touched the features of his picture exactly at the same distance at which he viewed his sitter.'

And Trimmer, the friend of Turner, had a note of the Gainsborough palette. 'Yellows: yellow ochre, Naples yellow, yellow lake, and for his high lights (but very seldom) some brighter yellow, probably a preparation of orpiment, raw sienna; Reds: vermilion, light red, Venetian, and the lakes; Browns: burnt sienna, cologne earth (this he used very freely, and brown pink the same). He used a great deal of terre verte, which he mixed with his blues, generally with ultramarine. Latterly he

used Cremona white . . . it was the purest white I ever used, and accounts for the purity of Gainsborough's carnations.' We know that he used indigo, and also asphaltum—with which, he boasted, he could paint a pit as deep as the infernal regions. Lawrence told Farington that he bought his Essence of Asphaltum from the shop where Gainsborough bought it—Strahan and Long in Long Acre, Covent Garden.

An old anecdote relates that Reynolds once remarked in an assembly of artists that Gainsborough was the first landscape-painter in Europe. To which poor Richard Wilson—himself an unappreciated landscape-painter and an equally unappreciated portrait man—immediately replied: 'Well, Sir Joshua, it is my opinion that he is also the greatest portrait-painter in Europe.'

Gainsborough's art must be divided into two categories, landscape and portraiture. He started life as a landscape-painter, the whole of his leisure was occupied in landscape work, and during his last working hours he was engaged upon a small landscape. In his correspondence, and in the scraps of conversation which have come down to us,

he has left no doubt as to his personal inclinations. There is a story that during one of the closing years at Schomberg House Lord Lansdowne paid him a visit. Gainsborough received him at the door, and let him through the corridors and rooms which, according to all contemporary accounts, were hung with his landscapes.

“ People won’t buy ’em, you know,” he explained, as they stepped into the painting room. ‘ I’m a landscape-painter,’ he continued excitedly, ‘ and yet they will come to me for portraits. I can’t paint portraits. Look at that damned arm. I have been at it all the morning, and I can’t get it right.’ Sir Walter Armstrong (our authority for the story) suggests that Gainsborough’s laments were due, not to any real preference for a landscape over a portrait, but merely to his impatience at the greater effort required by the latter. No landscape-painter will agree to the assertion that landscape painting is easier than portrait painting. Gainsborough himself never shirked difficulties, or avoided labour. He would not have reached his achievement as a portraitist had he merely considered

portrait commissions in the nature of an easy means of gaining sufficient fuel to boil the family pot. When he told Jackson that a 'face painter' was 'harassed to death' he was describing his own trials. The phrase is simply another rendering of the 'perpetual torment' to which, said Theodore Rousseau (a *paysagist*), all artists are subject. 'We are always striving to arrive at a truth which ever escapes our grasp.' We obtain a glimpse of the real Gainsborough in his complaint to Jackson that he is sick of portraits, and wishes to walk off to some sweet village where he can paint landscapes, and gaze at green trees and blue skies.

When Gainsborough worked as a boy-student in London during the reign of King George the Second landscape painting in English art did not exist. A few men produced laborious topographical views of parks and cities, best described as historical documents, useful records of fact, but otherwise uninspired and only in a slight degree to be considered as works of art. The English poets rhapsodised about a nature as artificial as the painted and enamelled

ladies who attended the Court of St. James. Pope turned from a consideration of the artificial charms of Belinda and Clarissa to sing of a country, where :

interspersed in lawns and opening glades,
Thin trees arise that shun each other's shades.
Here in full light the russet plains extend ;
There, wrapt in clouds, the bluish hills ascend.

And in the same poem he tells us how :

The level'd towns with weeds lie cover'd o'er ;
The hollow winds through naked temples roar ;
Round broken columns clasping ivy twined ;
O'er heaps of ruin stalk'd the stately hind ;
The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
And savage howlings fill the sacred quires.

This paraphernalia of classical landscape, an inheritance from Claude and Poussin, clogged the energies of the drawing genius of the mid-eighteenth century. Richard Wilson, great as he was, could not shake himself free from the tradition of ruins and temples. Not until the water-colour men began to practise unassumingly at reproducing the simple beauties of a natural world did the artists set aside their spectacles. Alexander Cozens was one of the earliest to travel on the new lines. He was not so much of a charlatan as some of his teaching

might lead us to suppose, and he must be forgiven many artistic sins because he was the father of a genius, John Robert Cozens. The details of his life are obscure, but he was living at Bath about the time Gainsborough was a citizen. If we compare the drawings of the two men we can detect many points of similarity.

The wonder is that Gainsborough threw off the old manner as he did. His early work is strongly reminiscent of the masters of the Dutch school. He went to Holland rather than to Italy. *Landguard Port*, so far as we can judge it from the engraving, is based on the coast scenes of Ruisdael—the cold grey dunes of Scheveningen on the opposite side of the North Sea. Ruisdael appears to have influenced Gainsborough more than any other painter of the Dutch school. In woodland composition and the design and interlacery of tree form the young Englishman followed the Amsterdam painter closely. The lesser Wynants was of considerable importance in his development. We know that he copied the work of this master several times. He not only made use of his methods, but he also freely

borrowed his properties. 'The palette is like his' (wrote Sir Walter Armstrong); 'the bits of roadside scenery, even the placing of the figures, the oppositions of sky and earth, of cloud and tree, of sandy foreground and forest edge, of empty to crowded spaces, are so identical that the difference could hardly be expressed in words. It is only in the delicacy of his colour and the lightness of his *impasto* that Gainsborough shows a distinct superiority at this time over his chosen guide.'

The canvas known as *Cornard Wood* marks the beginning of the school of English landscape painting. In his treatment of foliage, careful and patient in detail, a trifle hard and tight in craftsmanship, Gainsborough is still the disciple rather than the innovator. The composition is built up and balanced according to all the rules taught in the schools. Yet, notwithstanding this minute attention to the grammar of the brush, indications can be noted of a coming loosening of technique, and there is a feeling of enveloping atmosphere that is not always to be found in the forests of Meindert Hobbema and the sandpits of Jan

Wynants. Cornard Wood is a piece of England, a vista of Suffolk, and although it was certainly completed under an Ipswich roof, all the preliminary studies, and perhaps much of the actual painting, were commenced in the open air.

His later landscapes are combinations of strength and weakness. His brushwork becomes more liquid and fluent, his colour is glowingly luminous. He is the 'deep-thoughted, solemn Gainsborough' of Ruskin's page. 'Gainsborough's hand is as light as the sweep of a cloud, as swift as the flash of a sunbeam.' His masses are 'as broad as the first division in heaven of light from darkness'; his forms are 'grand, simple, and ideal.' The smaller landscapes of the last period, for pure insight and sublimity, must be ranked upon the same plane as his finest portraits. They prove that the artist was exerting his full powers as a landscape painter. His larger landscapes are not in every case so successful. In the *Market Cart*, now in the National Gallery, dating from the autumn of 1786, the central group leaves much to be desired. The cart horse has an improbable body---



National Gallery

THE MARKET CART

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 138)

Gainsborough's horses are as unconvincing as Reynolds's dogs—the peasants on the load are perched at an angle which threatens disaster at every jolt of the springless wagon. The foliage is unpleasant in colour, lacking in depth, and far from correct in drawing. The *Market Cart* was so enthusiastically praised when painted that it can only be supposed that Gainsborough's experiments on his palette have resulted in a deterioration of the pigments.

Although Gainsborough was an impressionist in the true sense of the word, for all his later landscapes, if not all his portraits, are brilliant and joyous impromptus, he was also—being a child of the eighteenth century—an artificialist. When he lived at Ipswich the open country was at the door of his house. From Bath he went on travelling excursions to Lulworth, to the lakes, along the roads and over the downs of the west country. In London he was confined to Pall Mall, despite his truant days at Kew and Richmond. His drawings became more mannered.

A paragraph from Reynolds's *Discourse* reveals his attitude. 'He had a habit of

continually remarking to those who happened to be about him whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever accidental combination of figure, or happy effects of light and shadow, occurred in prospects, in the sky, in walking the streets, or in company. If, in his walks, he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he brought into his painting room stumps of trees, weeds and animals of various kinds; and designed them not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table; composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints, the professors of landscapes can best determine.' With Sir Joshua it may be agreed that 'such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling; or they may be aids. I think, upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real nature, that practice may be more likely to do harm than good.'

A few examples of Gainsborough's early portraiture will be found in our public museums. At the National Portrait Gallery is the *Admiral Vernon* of 1749, and a small group of Joshua Kirby and wife, so immature that it is difficult to accept it as being the work of the artist. The *Admiral Vernon* is conscientious and capable, with a careful attention to detail which would commend itself to the Suffolk worthies who desired to be commemorated on canvas.

Then, at a bound, we are given the several portraits of his two daughters as children, which must date about 1755-1758, and gauge his skill towards the close of the Ipswich period. Versions of these groups are to be found in the National Gallery and at the South Kensington Museum. Nothing like them existed in the contemporary English art of their day. They are drawn with assured mastery, and the paint has been laid on lightly but sufficiently. Formal portraits of small children are a commonplace of early English portrait art. Here, however, Mary and Margaret Gainsborough are displayed with an enquiring pouting grace for which comparisons must be sought

across the Channel. The unfinished canvas in the National Gallery, in which Gainsborough's daughters are shown chasing a butterfly, is one of the most charming studies of childhood a painter has ever set down with brush.* These portraits mark the extraordinarily rapid advance of the artist in a branch of art he evidently adopted from necessity.

Gainsborough's first aim at Bath was to paint not only good portraits but striking likenesses. He had some trouble with Lady Dartmouth, and afterwards with the Duchess of Cumberland. He, soon, however, established his reputation for catching a likeness. In a letter written by Paul

* R. B. Haydon relates in his *Memoirs* that he and Wordsworth were discussing "some great defects in Cunningham's *Lives of the Painters*. Wordsworth said, 'I could have told him of Gainsborough.' He then sat down, and looked up like an Apostle and said, 'Gainsborough was at the house of a friend in Bath, who was ill and very fond of her daughter; she was going to school. Gainsborough said to the child, 'Can you keep a secret?' 'I don't know,' said the little dear, 'but I will try.' Said he, 'You are going to school. Your father loves you; I will paint your portrait.' The child sat. When she was gone, the portrait was placed at the bottom of the bed of the sick father, who was affected and delighted."

Whitehead from Bath in December 1758 the remark is made, 'We have a painter here who takes the most exact likenesses I ever saw ; his painting is coarse and slight, but has ease and spirit. Lord Villiers sat to him before he left Bath, and, I hope, we shall be able to bring his picture to town with us, as it is he himself.' Reynolds in the *Discourse* referred to the same gift. 'Gainsborough's portraits were often little more, in regard to finishing, or determining the form of the features, than what generally attends a dead colour ; but as he was always attentive to the general effect, or whole together, I have also imagined that this unfinished manner contributed even to that striking resemblance for which his portraits were so remarkable.' In this respect the President was not so famous. Hoppner said he wondered how Sir Joshua could venture to send home some of his portraits, so little resemblance did they bear to the originals.*

* Reynolds wrote a description of Dr. Johnson for Boswell, and in it he said : 'The habits of my profession unluckily extend to the consideration of so much only of character as lies on the surface, as is expressed in the lineaments of the countenance. An attempt to go deeper, and investigate the

The fourteen years at Bath represent the second and middle period of Gainsborough's life as an artist, and sealed his reputation as one of the most accomplished portrait painters of his time. Despite these brilliant productions, he had not reached maturity. The equestrian portrait of General Honywood is above the general average of his contemporaries—but not very much above. The *David Garrick* leaning against a bust of Shakespeare (at Stratford-on-Avon) is solid craftsmanship of the best quality. The *Captain Wade*, Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, is clever almost to the verge of superficiality. More serious is the portrait of Orpin, the parish clerk of Bradford-on-Avon, which passed from the collection of John Wiltshire, a descendent of the Bath carrier, to the National Gallery in 1867. This is dated about 1769. A portrait of *John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*, represents the smaller oval portraits which were painted in such numbers at Bath. It is generally dated

peculiar colouring of his mind as distinguished from all other minds, nothing but your earnest desire can excuse.' This suggests that Sir Joshua did not ever intend to go very far in revealing the character of his sitters.

about 1768, and can be seen at the National Portrait Gallery. *Dr. Schomberg* (National Gallery) belongs to the close of the Bath period.

During this time Gainsborough varied in his colour key, and was more than once accused of painting in too high a tone. 'His colours are too glowing,' wrote a critic in 1772. Another complained that he threw a dash of purple into every colour from his pencil. His pigments have mellowed during the past century, and it is difficult to judge the truth of the complaint. Mr. Whitley explains that most of the women in society painted and used cosmetics, but the portraits of his male sitters were also said to have an unnaturally florid complexion and these sitters, at least, did not spend long hours with rouge and pomade.

Gainsborough told Francis Bourgeois that 'a chaste colouring was as necessary to a picture as modesty to an artist.' In 1772 he wrote the following curious letter to Garrick on the same matter: 'When the streets are paved with brilliants and the skies made of rainbows I suppose you'll be contented and satisfied with red, blue, and

yellow. It appears to me that fashion, let it consist of false or true taste, will have its run like a runaway horse ; for when eyes and ears are thoroughly debauched by glare and noise the returning to modest truth will seem very gloomy for a time, and I know you are cursedly puzzled how to make this retreat without putting out your lights and losing the advantage of all our new discoveries of transparent painting, &c.—how to satisfy your tawdry friends while you steal back into the mild evening gleam and quiet middle term. I'll tell you, my sprightly genius, how this is to be done. Maintain all your lights, but spare the poor abused colours till the eye rests and recovers. Keep up your music by supplying the place of *noise* by more sound, more harmony and more tune, and split that cursed fife and drum. What ever so great a genius as Mr. Garrick may say or do to support our false taste, he must feel the truth of what I am now saying, that neither our plays, paintings, or music are any longer real works of invention, but the abuse of Nature's lights and what has been already invented in former times.' Gainsborough's meaning

is somewhat obscure, but this letter was evidently the prelude to his return to a quieter palette.

A marked inconsistency between theory and practice concerns his portraits in costume. During his discussion with Lord Dartmouth in 1771 he did not conceal his views upon 'the ridiculous use of fancy dresses in portraits.' 'Nothing,' he wrote, 'can be more absurd than the foolish custom of painters dressing people like scaramouches and expecting the likeness to appear. . . . A tune may be so confused by a false bass that if it is ever so plain, simple, and full of meaning it shall become a jumble of nonsense, and just so shall a handsome face be overset by a fictitious bundle of trumpery of the foolish painter's own inventing.' Yet Gainsborough repeatedly painted his sitters in fancy costume, the most celebrated example being the *Blue Boy*.

The *Blue Boy* has become the subject of legend which critical research does not wholly uphold. In 1832 John Taylor, an old artist of ninety-three who—like Gainsborough—had been a student of Francis Hayman, was talking with John Thomas

Smith, the writer of *A Book for a Rainy Day*.

"Did you know Gainsborough, sir?" asked Smith.

"Oh, I remember him; he was an odd man at times. I recollect my master, Hayman, coming home after he had been to the Exhibition, and saying what an extraordinary picture Gainsborough had painted of a Blue Boy. It is fine as Van Dyck!"

"Who was the Blue Boy, sir?"

"Why, he was an ironmonger, but why so called I don't know. He lived at the corner of Greek and King Streets, Soho; an immensely rich man."

Jonathan Buttall was of Ipswich family, and was evidently upon close terms of friendship with Gainsborough, for in 1796, when some of his property was put up for sale by auction, the lots included pictures and drawings by the painter. In 1788 he had been amongst the mourners at the funeral in Kew. The date of the picture was probably 1769-70, for when Mary Moser wrote a chronicle of news to Fuseli about the Academy exhibition of 1770 she described Gainsborough as being 'beyond himself in the portrait of a gentleman in a Van Dyck

habit.' If 'Old Taylor's' memory is to be trusted, and Hayman's remark correctly reported, the date 1770 stands, for Hayman died in 1776. In the Academy of 1770 the full-length No. 85 is tentatively suggested as being the *Blue Boy*, the alternative date being 1779.

The point is interesting, for 1770 makes the *Blue Boy* one of the achievements of the Bath period, whilst 1779 brings it within the Pall Mall activities. If it was painted in 1779 some truth may be found in the story that it was painted to confute a theory set out in the eighth discourse of Sir Joshua Reynolds, delivered at the Academy in December, 1778: 'Although it is not my business to enter into the detail of our art, yet I must take this opportunity of mentioning one of the means of producing that great effect which we observe in the works of the great Venetian painters, as I think it is not generally known or observed. It ought, in my opinion, to be indispensably observed, that the masses of light in a picture be always of a warm mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white; and that the blue, the grey, or the green colours be kept almost

entirely out of these masses, and be used only to support and set off these warm colours and for this purpose, a small proportion of cold colours will be sufficient. Let this conduct be reversed ; let the light be cold, and the surrounding colours warm, as we often see in the works of the Roman and Florentine painters, and it will be out of the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens and Titian, to make a picture splendid and harmonious.'

Sir Walter Armstrong truly observes that Reynolds seems to have fallen into the strange error of confusing colour with tint, and suggests that Gainsborough's answer to the theory in the eighth discourse is *Mrs. Siddons* (in the National Gallery), painted in 1785, in which Gainsborough has carefully broken every law laid down by the President. Reynolds's 'own practice should have warned him of the infelicity of the terms he was using. A cold blue is enough to destroy the splendour of a picture even when it is kept to subordinate parts ; a warm blue, glowing with inner light, makes as fine a keynote as any painter can desire. Sir Joshua's statement comes, in fact, to



National Gallery

MRS. SIDDONS

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

(face p. 150)

little more than the truism that a splendid colour effect cannot be produced with cold colour, for a cold red would be quite as bad as a cold blue.'

The origin of the story is probably to be found in Burnet's *Practical Treatise on Painting*, published in 1827. The author disagrees with Sir Joshua's rule, and adds: 'I believe Gainsborough painted the portrait of a boy dressed in blue, now in the possession of Lord Grosvenor, to show the fallacy of this doctrine.' Sir Thomas Lawrence wrote to Burnet in 1829: 'Agreeing with you in so many points, I still venture to differ from you in your question with Sir Joshua. Infinitely various as Nature is, there are still two or three truths that limit her variety, or rather that limit Art in the imitation of her. I should instance for one the ascendancy of white objects, which can never be departed from with impunity, and again the union of colour with light. Masterly as the execution of that picture is, I always feel a never changing impression on my eye that the *Blue Boy* of Gainsborough is a difficulty boldly combated, not conquered.' Mr. Whitley has discovered

a curious paragraph in the *European Magazine* for August 1798 which refers to the Blue Boy as being 'in the possession of a tradesman in Greek Street. Gainsborough had seen a portrait of a boy by Titian for the first time, and having found a model that pleased him he set to work with all the enthusiasm of his genius. "I am proud," he said, "of being of the same profession with Titian, and was resolved to attempt something like him."'

Titian may have been one of the many artistic factors in the development of Gainsborough's art, but Van Dyck was his abiding inspiration. The *Blue Boy* is a typical Gainsborough-Van Dyck pastiche. He painted some dozen portraits of youths in 'Van Dyck habits,' notably the magnificent *Lord Archibald Campbell*, the *Master Plampin* in white satin, and the *George Canning as a Youth*. This Van Dyck mannerism slowly merged into his personal method, for the portrait of Gainsborough Dupont, which was on his easel when he died, was directly inspired by Van Dyck but is yet pure Gainsborough.

During his third and last period, the

fourteen years he spent at Schomberg House, the certainty of his hand and eye approached perfection. His full-length portraits were not invariably happy; at their best they were never second to the huge canvases which appeared with such unfailing regularity from the rival studio in Leicester Square. The portrait of Mrs. Graham (in the National Gallery, Edinburgh) is, in a restricted class, one of the great portraits of the world. But Gainsborough was more at ease when he painted women he knew, and women with whom he could sympathise. Thus he captured for the future the enervating fascination of the unhappy Perdita (the *Mrs. Robinson* of the Wallace Collection); and the grace of the wonderful Linleys (Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell) with those haunting eyes no visitor to the Dulwich Gallery can ever forget. The supreme pictures of this period, the *Morning Walk*, the *Mall*, and the *Duke and Duchess of Cumberland*, have already been mentioned. In his last period Gainsborough excites comparisons not with Reynolds and Romney but with Boucher. And if we set the Frenchman's *Pompadour* by the side of

our own Perdita, both unhappy mistresses of heedless and cold-blooded princes, we can immediately detect the difference. The first is a painted mask ; the second a tortured, tired, disillusioned, living soul.

Gainsborough's technical dexterity steadily advanced year by year, and his death-bed remark, that he was dying at the very moment he was beginning to comprehend the secrets of his art, is perfectly intelligible. His method was an entirely personal one, and Reynolds almost apologises for it in his *Discourse*. ' It is certain,' said the President, ' that all those odd scratches and marks, which, on close examination, are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which even to experienced painters appear rather the effect of accident than design ; this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance, by a kind of magic, at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places, so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence, under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence. . . . The slightness which we see in his best works cannot always be imputed to negligence.

However they may appear to superficial observers, painters know very well that a steady attention to the general effect takes up more time, and is much more laborious to the mind, than any mode of high finishing, or smoothness, without such attention. His handling, the method of leaving the colours, or, in other words, the methods he used for producing the effect, had very much the appearance of the work of an artist who had never learned from others the usual and regular practice belonging to the art ; but still, like a man of strong intuitive perception of what was required, he found out a way of his own to accomplish his purpose. . . . It must be allowed, that this hatching manner of Gainsborough did very much contribute to the lightness of effect which is so eminent a beauty in his pictures. . . . The likeness of a portrait, as I have formerly observed, consists more in preserving the general effect of the countenance, than in the most minute finishing of the features, or any of the particular parts. Now Gainsborough's portraits were often little more, in regard to finishing, or determining the form of the

features, than what generally attends a dead colour; but as he was always attentive to the general effect, or whole together, I have often imagined that this unfinished manner contributed even to that striking resemblance for which his portraits are so remarkable.'

Although Gainsborough worshipped Van Dyck, his brush draughtsmanship is more akin to that of Velazquez and Hals. In the National Gallery is a small portrait of Miss Elizabeth Singleton, bequeathed by Mr. George Salting, which recalls in many respects the rapid handling of the Dutch painter. Reynolds, whose affinities were with the methods of the later masters of Bologna and Rome, was not in accord with the less laborious ideals of his contemporary. It says much for his fairness of judgment, and breadth of outlook, that in the lecture room of the Academy he praised the results of a technique to which he could never give whole-hearted approval.

As he grew older Gainsborough's mastery of colour became absolute. He set aside experiments in strong colour, but he loved a warm hue as a dominant note. Blue

seems to have been a favourite on his palette. Writing to Jackson in 1768 he thanked his correspondent for a gift of indigo. 'Your indigo is clean, like your understanding, and pure as your music . . . 'tis delightful, so look sharp for some more (and I'll send you a drawing).' In a later letter he continues, 'Thanks for the indigo—a little of it goes a great way, which is lucky.' The famous portrait of Mrs. Siddons, in the National Gallery, painted in March 1785, is an example of his treatment of an alluring but dangerous pigment. Reynolds had recently exhibited the *Tragic Muse*, which Sir Thomas Lawrence declared to be the finest portrait in the world. Within a few months Mrs. Siddons was sitting to Gainsborough. Both artists painted masterpieces, but no two masterpieces could be more dissimilar.

Reynolds and Gainsborough approached their beautiful model from different angles. Reynolds flattered his sitters by painting them as goddesses. He was able to paint flesh and blood, but he never forgot to paint high and mighty ladies. He surveyed womankind with a curious detachment. He listened to their gossip—or as much of it as

his deafness allowed him to hear—with courtly grace. He paid delightfully insincere compliments, and dismissed the whole sex from his thoughts with a pinch of snuff. They interested him professionally, but they did not disturb his sleep. Mrs. Siddons was a tragedy queen, and as a tragedy queen—and not as a woman—Sir Joshua painted her, seated on a tragedy throne and squired by attendant furies.

Gainsborough produced a *portrait intime*, a very faithful reproduction of the face of a beautiful and enigmatic woman. For Mrs. Siddons was in many respects sphinx-like—as indeed are all women of character—and, in front of this canvas, we are propounded a riddle as impossible to unravel as any propounded upon Egyptian sands.

Gainsborough was a painter of sex, and in his portraits we always feel a slight heart flutter. His sitters affected him personally. Writing a few days after the artist's death Thicknesse related an anecdote that Gainsborough had destroyed a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire with the exclamation that her grace's face was too hard for him. Bate-Dudley immediately

denied the truth of the story. 'The remark is too stupid ever to have passed Mr. Gainsborough's lips.' It may not have passed his lips in the exact words, but the idea is characteristic of the artist who refused to paint an alderman because he did not like his proposed sitter's appearance.*

Thomas Gainsborough was an emotional and never a scientific painter. He painted as he talked, and his letters give a close reproduction of his brilliant conversation. He was alternately lively and depressed; erratic and logical; wrong-headed, with keen flashes of intuitive and unreasoned discernment; witty, coarse, modest, humble, bold. Always heart directed rather than head governed, a mingling of weakness and strength, at once very loveable and wildly distracting, a true man with much of the woman in his nature—and, for that reason alone, one of the most devoted worshippers, and one of the greatest painters, woman has ever had at her feet.

* It must be added that in a letter written at Bath in 1771 Gainsborough wrote, 'Nothing is so common to me as to give up my own sight in my painting room rather than hazard giving offence to my best customers.'

APPENDIX I.

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APPENDIX II.

LIST OF PICTURES BY GAINSBOROUGH IN BRITISH GALLERIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY.

- The Market Cart.
 Rustic Children.
 Mrs. Siddons (1785).
 Ralph Schomberg, M.D., F.S.A.
 The Baillie Family (about 1784).
 Wood-Scene, Cornard, Suffolk (about 1753).
 The Rev. Sir Henry Bate-Dudley, Bart. (about 1780).
 Portrait of a Young Man.
 View of Dedham.

Miss Margaret Gainsborough.
 The Painter's Daughters (about 1755).
 The Painter's Daughters (unfinished).
 A Classical Landscape.
 The Bridge (about 1777).
 Sir William Blackstone, LL.D.
 Miss Elizabeth Singleton.
 Mrs. Graham as a Housemaid.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF BRITISH ART (TATE
 GALLERY, MILLBANK).

The Watering Place (about 1775).
 Musidora Bathing her Feet.
 The Watering Place.
 Landscape : Sunset.
 Portrait of Abel Moysey.
 Portrait of Orpin, Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-
 Avon, Wilts.
 The Watering Place : Three Cows (about 1775).
 Two Dogs : ' Tristram ' and ' Fox.'
 Study of an old Horse.
 Landscape (about 1758).
 Landscape (about 1758).
 Rustics with Donkeys.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.

Group of the Princesses Charlotte Augusta
 Matilda, Augusta Sophia, and Elizabeth.
 Queen Charlotte.
 Cart Horses at a Drinking Trough (Jones
 Bequest).
 Portrait of John Joshua Kirby (Dyce Bequest).
 The Painter's Daughters (Forster Bequest).
 Landscape with Cows (Ionides Bequest).

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY.

Jeffrey, Baron Amherst.
 John, fourth Duke of Bedford.
 George Colman.
 Charles, Marquess Cornwallis (1785).
 Portrait of the Artist.

John Henderson.
Stringer Lawrence.
Admiral Vernon.
John Joshua Kirby and his Wife.

HERTFORD HOUSE (WALLACE COLLECTION).
Mrs. Robinson, " Perdita " (1781).
Miss Haverfield.

ROYAL ACADEMY.
Portrait of the Artist.
Prince Hoare (painted by Gainsborough and
Hoare).

LINCOLN'S INN.
William Pitt.
Sir John Skynner.

SOCIETY OF ARTS.
Jacob, Viscount Folkestone.

HABERDASHERS' HALL.
Jerome Knapp (1787).

DRAPERS' HALL.
John Smith (1787).

IRONMONGERS' HALL.
Viscount Hood.

EQUITABLE ASSURANCE CO.
Sir Charles Gould.
Sir Charles Morgan, Bt.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS.
George III.

TRINITY HOUSE.
Richard, Earl Howe.

MARINE SOCIETY.
John Thornton.

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.
Richard Warren, M.D.

FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

View of the Charterhouse, 1754-6.

DULWICH GALLERY.

Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell.
P. J. de Louthembourg, R.A.
Thomas Linley.
Samuel Linley, R.N.
Mrs. Moody and her Children.

GREENWICH, ROYAL NAVAL HOSPITAL.

Family of George III.
Lord Sandwich.

HAMPTON COURT.

Johann Christian Fischer.
Colonel St. Leger.
Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester.
A Jewish Rabbi (after Rembrandt).

ABINGDON, TOWN HALL.

Queen Charlotte.

BATH, HOLBURNE ART MUSEUM.

Landscape.
Portrait of a Lady.

BIRMINGHAM, ASTON HILL.

Sir Charles Holte.

CAMBRIDGE, FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM.

Hon. W. Fitzwilliam.
William Pitt.

DUBLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY.

Hugh, Duke of Northumberland.
James Quinn.
A Suffolk Landscape (? Dedham).

EDINBURGH, NATIONAL GALLERY.

Hon. Mrs. Graham.
Dr. Middleton.
The Labourer.

GLASGOW, ART GALLERY.

Donkeys in a Storm.

IPSWICH, CHRISTCHURCH MANSION.

Tom Peartree.

LEEDS, CITY ART GALLERY.

William Pitt.

LEICESTER, CORPORATION ART GALLERY.

Miss Adney (1760).

MANCHESTER, CITY ART GALLERY.

General Wolfe.

NORWICH, CASTLE MUSEUM.

Sir H. Harbord.

OXFORD, ASHMOLEAN.

Cattle in a Pond on the Skirts of a Wood.

OXFORD, CHRIST CHURCH.

John Skinner.

Wellbore Ellis, Lord Mendip.

David Garrick.

READING, CORPORATION ART GALLERY.

The Storm.

SALFORD, ROYAL MUSEUM.

Laurence Sterne.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON, MUSEUM.

David Garrick.

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